



Public Relations Strategies

Level 4 Project



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Public Relations Strategies

About Public Relations Strategies

The purpose of public relations is to create and maintain a positive reputation for a person or organization. It's also used to increase public awareness, generate goodwill, and build credibility.

In this project, you will learn to promote awareness of an organization, formulate a public relations strategy, and use various public relations tactics. You will also learn to identify which media channels are available to reach your intended audience.

Keep in mind that if you want to initiate a public relations campaign on behalf of your club, you must work with the Vice President Public Relations.

Resources

The following is a list of resources available in your digital project on Base Camp. Some of these resources, such as evaluations, are also available on the Resources section on Base Camp.

Project Checklist

Evaluation Resource

News Release Template

Introduction and Assignment

Introduction

The main purpose of public relations is forming positive relationships with the media and public.

Your Assignment

Purpose: The purpose of this project is to practice the skills needed to effectively use public relations strategies for any group or situation.

Overview: Create a public relations plan for a real or hypothetical group or situation. If it involves your club, it must be hypothetical unless you communicate with the Vice President Public Relations and Club President. Share your plan in a 5- to 7-minute speech at a club meeting. This speech is not a report on the content of this project but an example of how you will or might apply what you learned.

Throughout this project you will see icons in the margins next to the text. These icons indicate additional resources available online.



Video: Sign in to Base Camp to watch a video that supports this project.



Interactive Activity: Sign in to Base Camp to complete an interactive activity.



Resource: Sign in to Base Camp to view this resource online.



Weblink: Return to your digital project when you see this icon to link to a website or Base Camp location.

For all assignment details and requirements, review the [Project Checklist](#).

Learning in Public Relations Strategies

Assess and Reflect



To assess and track your knowledge, complete the activity below by listing what you already know and what you wonder about the topic today. Add up to five items to each list. After you complete your project, you will have an opportunity to review your answers and add what you have learned.

Know

For example: I know how to formulate a public relations strategy.

Wonder

For example: I wonder which media channels are available to reach my intended audience.

Competencies

The following is a list of competencies that you will learn and practice in this project.

- Formulate a public relations strategy.
- Display an understanding of how to use various public relations tactics to communicate your message.
- Demonstrate knowledge of how to promote awareness of an organization or event.
- Identify various media channels that can be used to disseminate your message.

Defining Public Relations

Public relations is the practice of creating, promoting, and maintaining a favorable image of an individual, organization, or cause. The audience may be internal, such as employees, or external, such as the general public. Public relations messages are disseminated through the use of tactics such as posting to websites and social media, sending news releases, and holding special events.

Public relations usually has one of three purposes:

- To create positive public opinion where none currently exists
- To reinforce existing positive opinion
- To change existing negative or neutral opinion into positive opinion

Advertising and marketing focus more on creating demand for a product or service as well as influencing the behavior of consumers. These activities may require a large budget. In contrast, the result of a good public relations strategy is free or low-cost publicity. Many organizations successfully combine public relations, marketing, and advertising to spread their message to the public.

Branding

The focus of this project is on ways to obtain free publicity through the use of effective public relations.

Part of public relations is protecting the individual or organization's brand. A brand is an exclusive and desirable idea embodied in products, places, services, people, and experiences. For example, the Toastmasters International brand is embodied in the tagline "Where Leaders Are Made."



Weblink: The Toastmasters International Brand Manual is available online at toastmasters.org/Brandmanual.

Creating a Public Relations Strategy

The following steps can be used whether you want to build your personal brand, increase awareness of your club, create support for a cause, or let the public know about the products and services of a company or other organization.

Though your core public relations message remains the same, you may tailor it depending on the outlet and the audience.

Know Your Objective

The first step to determining your strategy is knowing the purpose and desired outcome of your communication. For example, if your club is holding an open house to attract new members, your objective is to promote the meeting and the benefits of Toastmasters to your audience.

Define Your Message

Analyze the qualities and values of your organization and how these will benefit an audience. In the example of the open house, consider what community members will gain from attending your club. Benefits include networking and meeting new people. If they join the club, they will gain public speaking and leadership skills along with self-confidence.

Identify Your Audience

Once you have defined your message, identify your target audience. Your audience is determined by many factors, including your objective, your geographic area, and what you are publicizing. Perhaps you need to reach specific segments of the public, such as people who speak a certain language, are of a particular age group, or who have children.

For a special event such as a Toastmasters open house, your audience is anyone 18 years of age or older.

Research the Media

Different media channels, such as news websites, television and radio stations, newspapers, and magazines, typically specialize in certain types of news. A local television station that broadcasts in a language spoken by some members of your community wants news that pertains to its audience. A magazine that covers parenting and children is not likely to be interested in your club's speech contest winner unless there is some connection to its readers.

Search online to find which media operate in your area and the audience they serve. You can often find this information on their websites. Know how each audience will benefit from what you are promoting. You can also determine how and to whom newsworthy information must be submitted. Pay attention to any deadlines and how far in advance they must receive information.

Contact the Media

Create a compelling story and develop brief talking points so that you can convey your message in a way that will capture the attention of media outlets and audiences. Be sure to include pertinent information such as who, what, when, where, and why you are promoting an organization or individual. The message should be clear and your facts correct.

Disseminate the Message

There are many ways to communicate your message to the public. Some you may already know and can do yourself, such as giving a speech, updating an existing website, posting to your social media networks, or using a website for posting classified ads.

Other options for do-it-yourself public relations include making fliers or posters and obtaining permission to post them in high-traffic areas where members of your target audience may see them, such as colleges and universities, markets, libraries, and community centers.

Determining Newsworthiness

Newsworthiness is determined by the media in many different ways. Here are some of the most common:

Timely

Reporters look for events and activities that are happening now or in the near future. Something that happened last week is no longer news.

Relevant

The organization, cause, or event you're publicizing must have relevance to your target audience. For example, if a heavily traveled road will be closed for a period of time, the news is relevant to anyone who regularly uses that street.

Prominent

If an important person, place, or thing is a part of your news, it's more likely to interest reporters. For example, if your club gives an award to a member, it's not necessarily newsworthy. However, if the club member is a prominent figure such as the mayor of your town or chief executive of a well-known local organization, the news media may be more interested.

Topical

If your organization, cause, or event can be linked to a culturally significant holiday, time of year, or event, it's more likely to receive news coverage. An example is promoting a product or service that can be given as a gift before a holiday when gifts are typically exchanged.

Human Interest

Great stories that elicit an emotional response are always in demand. People who triumph over adversity, have a fascinating talent, or experience something that others can only imagine are all examples of human interest stories. Every person has one; you just have to discover it. It is likely that there are individuals with newsworthy human interest stories in your organization or club who would be willing to share them with you.

Visual

If your organization can provide great images (photos, video, etc.) to visual media such as television, print, or online news, you increase your chances of attracting reporters' attention.

Providing the Right Information

What you are publicizing may help to determine when you complete these public relations tactics. If it's a popular, high-profile, or regularly scheduled event such as a free community concert in the summer, you may want to begin publicizing it two to three months, or more, in advance. For smaller or more informal events or activities, 7–14 days is often sufficient. Allow more time around holidays or large-scale events in which many people participate, such as summer vacations or the beginning of school terms.

Be sure to provide the information that your audience needs to reach you or a designated contact person, such as name, phone number, website, and email. Also include brief information about:

- **Who** is involved or featured.
- **What** you are publicizing.
- **Where** your club or organization is located, or in the case of a special event, will be located—include a map or directions if necessary. If your event is virtual or hybrid, include information about how to access your event online.
- **When** your organization is open, your club meets, or your event will be held; if an RSVP is required, include the deadline for doing so.
- **Why** the public should know about your message (i.e., the benefits to them).

Public Relations Tactics

Many public relations tactics can be used to communicate your message. Determine which ones meet your unique situation.

News/Press Releases

A news release is a concise written announcement sent to the media to gain publicity. Journalists may use news releases to contact you for more information. News releases are quick and inexpensive to produce and can be distributed to journalists easily via email or shared through social media.

Pitches to Journalists

You can contact specific journalists or editors directly. This is also known as “pitching.” Pitches are brief and include the main points of what you are seeking to publicize (such as a Toastmasters open house), why it's important to the audience the journalist serves, and why they should report on it.

Pitching stories is less formal than a news release and is most effective when you already have a relationship with the journalist.

Interviews

Podcasts, webcasts, television shows, and radio stations may interview guests who can provide specific information to the media audience. They may seek guests who are experts on certain topics and are well-known.

Use media websites to research the topics or organizations typically covered by specific media. If appropriate, you can propose a guest interview about a specific topic.

Special Events

Holding or sponsoring a special event is a great way to inform the public of your message. An event may be small and local or bring together individuals and organizations from around the globe. It may be open to the public or to a select group of guests. Events may be held live and in person or virtually.

Social Media

Many news organizations use social media to connect with the public. Research each news organization's website for detailed audience demographics to assist you in tailoring your message.



Resource: Use the Sample News Release as a guide for completing a News Release Template for your club, Area, Division, or District. If you are not a club officer or District leader, be sure to check with leadership before disseminating any information on behalf of Toastmasters International.

Proofread your final news release carefully when you are done writing it. Ask another person, such as a club officer or District leader, to review the news release before it is distributed. Contact your Vice President Public Relations or District Public Relations Manager for a list of media contacts.

Evaluating Public Relations

Plan to monitor any results of your strategy and follow up as required. After beginning your public relations tactics and strategy, track inquiries, new members, and other results of your efforts. If possible, compare these results with those from before you started your public relations efforts to determine effectiveness.

Most organizations have specially trained, designated spokespersons who are authorized to address the public and the media, especially during times of crisis or negative public opinion. Here are some of the responsibilities of these professionals:

- Anticipate adverse public responses and have plans in place to address them.
- Meet with others in the organization who will be called upon in an emergency to practice coordinating responses.
- Know the main stakeholders who must be provided information during a crisis or negative public opinion.
- Confirm and acquire appropriate approval of all information before it is released. Know who will be delivering the information to which audiences and how it will be disseminated. For example, the chief executive officer will contact board members directly, while employees may be notified of an issue in a meeting or by email.
- Provide identified audiences with ongoing information, including the facts about the situation, who is involved, and any action or response by the organization, if applicable.
- Remain calm, professional, and honest about the crisis or negative public opinion.

Exercises

In addition to this project assignment, you can learn more about public relations by performing one or more of these exercises. They will help you gain experience but are not required to complete this project.

- Meet with the Vice President Public Relations of your club to discuss their responsibilities.
- Learn the steps to becoming Vice President Public Relations.
- Review public relations resources available on the Toastmasters website.

Review and Apply

Before you complete the assignment, take a moment to read through the questions you see here. If you are not able to answer them comfortably, review the project.

- What are the steps to formulate a public relations strategy?
- How can you use public relations tactics to communicate your message to the public?
- What strategies can you use to promote awareness of your club or organization?
- How can you determine which media channels to contact for the most effective distribution of your message?

Complete Your Assignment



Project Checklist

Now that you have read through the project, plan and prepare your speech or report. First, review your assignment.

This project includes:

- Creating a public relations strategy
- A 5- to 7-minute speech

The following list includes tasks for this project. Please remember, your project is unique to you. You can use the checklist here or complete the digital version in your project on Base Camp.

Plan a simple public relations strategy.

Schedule your speech with the Vice President Education. If you need more time to share your strategy with your club, you may schedule an 8- to 10-minute speech with the approval of the Vice President Education.

Write a speech to share your public relations strategy with your club.

Rehearse your speech.

When all components of your assignment are finished, complete your self-reflection by adding what you have learned to the last column of the Know-Wonder-Learned activity.

Evaluation Criteria



Review the criteria for the evaluation in this project. Your evaluator will use the following scale:

5 – Exemplary 4 – Excels 3 – Accomplished 2 – Emerging 1 – Developing

Clarity

- 5 – Is an exemplary public speaker who is always understood
- 4 – Excels at communicating using the spoken word
- 3 – Spoken language is clear and is easily understood
- 2 – Spoken language is somewhat unclear or challenging to understand
- 1 – Spoken language is unclear or not easily understood

Vocal Variety

- 5 – Uses the tools of tone, speed, and volume to perfection
- 4 – Excels at using tone, speed, and volume as tools
- 3 – Uses tone, speed, and volume as tools
- 2 – Use of tone, speed, and volume requires further practice
- 1 – Ineffective use of tone, speed, and volume

Eye Contact

- 5 – Uses eye contact to convey emotion and elicit response
- 4 – Uses eye contact to gauge audience reaction and response
- 3 – Effectively uses eye contact to engage audience
- 2 – Eye contact with audience needs improvement
- 1 – Makes little or no eye contact with audience

Gestures

- 5 – Fully integrates physical gestures with content to deliver an exemplary speech
- 4 – Uses physical gestures as a tool to enhance speech
- 3 – Uses physical gestures effectively
- 2 – Uses somewhat distracting or limited gestures
- 1 – Uses very distracting gestures or no gestures

Audience Awareness

- 5 – Engages audience completely and anticipates audience needs
- 4 – Is fully aware of audience engagement/needs and responds effectively
- 3 – Demonstrates awareness of audience engagement and needs
- 2 – Audience engagement or awareness of audience requires further practice
- 1 – Makes little or no attempt to engage audience or meet audience needs

Comfort Level

- 5 – Appears completely self-assured with the audience
- 4 – Appears fully at ease with the audience
- 3 – Appears comfortable with the audience
- 2 – Appears uncomfortable with the audience
- 1 – Appears highly uncomfortable with the audience

Interest

- 5 – Fully engages audience with exemplary, well-constructed content
- 4 – Engages audience with highly compelling, well-constructed content
- 3 – Engages audience with interesting, well-constructed content
- 2 – Content is interesting but not well-constructed or is well-constructed but not interesting
- 1 – Content is neither interesting nor well-constructed

Topic

- 5 – Delivers an exemplary speech about some aspect of their public relations strategy
- 4 – Delivers a compelling speech about some aspect of their public relations strategy
- 3 – Shares some aspect of their public relations strategy
- 2 – Mentions some aspect of their public relations strategy but does not fully address
- 1 – Speaks on a topic other than their public relations strategy

Visual Aids (Optional)

- 5 – Visual aids are an integral and seamless part of an exemplary presentation
- 4 – Use of visual aids enhances the speech or presentation of the public relations strategy
- 3 – Uses visual aids effectively
- 2 – Use of visual aids is somewhat effective but could be improved
- 1 – Use of visual aids is ineffective

Complete Your Project



Once you have delivered your speech and received your evaluation, take a minute to review what you recorded under “Know” and “Wonder” in the Assess and Reflect section at the start of this project. Then add what you have learned while working through this project. Add up to five items.

Learned

For example: I learned how to promote awareness of an organization, cause, or event.

Before You Move On

Review Your Learning

Review all the material in this project.

Deliver Your Speech

Plan, practice, and deliver your speech.

Receive Your Evaluation

Receive your evaluation and complete any other tasks required by your club.

Assess and Reflect

When all components of your assignment are finished, complete your self-reflection by adding what you have learned to the last column of the Know-Wonder-Learned activity.

Congratulations!

If you have completed every task, CONGRATULATIONS! You have completed your Public Relations Strategies project and you are ready to move on to your next project.



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