

CHAPTER 6: Evaluating Public Relations and Advertising

“Learning and innovation go hand in hand. The arrogance of success is to think that what you did yesterday will be sufficient for tomorrow.”

William Pollard

Recording media response, including tracking articles and radio/TV coverage is important. Whether creating a clipping book that includes all print coverage or reporting on the numbers of people attending a press conferences or special event, it is always important to find out if a communications strategy can be better, smarter, or modified to provide improved service. “Evaluation should not come as an afterthought. Setting goals and objectives in advance will help you establish benchmarks against which you can measure future activities. ... Plan now to evaluate later.”¹⁰

Tracking Communication Efforts

Monitoring the public relations and advertising process should be done at all levels of an organization. This includes a constant monitoring and awareness process in which all levels of the organization can participate. Monitoring the public relations and advertising status on a regular basis allows for noticing problems, issues, developments, trends, and opportunities that may affect the promotion process.

Tracking PR can be labor intensive. Searching the various mediums (print, TV, radio, etc.) will need to be done. This is done using Internet searches, scanning newspapers, listening to radio and television broadcast, etc. The goal is to track and monitor what type of coverage the event is obtaining. A search of newspaper clippings and broadcast publicity is used to analyze the quantity and quality of coverage. Analysis can be broken down by audience, message and frequency. Another thing to consider is the prestige of the publication or broadcast source. Keep in mind who receives these mediums and their attitudes toward the promoted material. Consider whether those receiving the message are those who were intended to receive it. Defining medium usage will allow a more precise target audience in future planning strategies. These issues will be the baseline for starting the evaluation.

Evaluation methods and techniques

Evaluation methods will depend on the type of event or promotion that has taken place. If it was the first event or promotion of its kind, then there are no previous standards to compare it to. On the same note, standards and expectations for the event should be made ahead of time to see if expectations are met.

The type of promotion will determine the evaluation. If it was a fund raiser, monitor the funds and analyze what worked for raising funds. How much was raised? Were goals

¹⁰ Bonk, Griggs and Tynes, p. 159

met? Was the correct audience reached? Did the audience include communities that generally donate to charitable organizations?

The same is true for monitoring a publicized event. In this example, numbers are important. The number of people that turned out for the event, the number of media that covered it, the number of people reached by the media and the area or geographic region reached are all necessary figures important for evaluation of the event and future events to come. What went well? What needs to be improved? Based on these results, analysis can be made of what worked and which areas did not. Additionally the evaluation will serve as a template for future analysis.

It is important to find an evaluation that will relate to the event and affords an appropriate means of measurement for the different type of events. Questions should be asked about the event. If goals were not met or exceeded, what contributed to this? Was it due to weather, lack of planning, lack of funding, coverage, participation levels, or something else? These are issues that can be remedied if an evaluation is done identifying the problem areas. On the other hand, if the event is received better than anticipated; this needs to be addressed as well. Additional staff, more seating, extended hours, and other adjustments can be considered for the next event.

Was there something making people decide at the last minute to participate in the event? Maybe the event benefits less fortunate people and just prior to the event there was a natural disaster. In this example, people might feel compelled to participate. These are examples reflecting an inaccurate representation of promotion efforts. Keep these factors in mind when evaluating events.

Finally, compile a synopsis of the event. Do not make it too lengthy, putting the important information up front. Let others know the results and recommendations for an improved event in the future.