Step One

Defining Public Relations Problems
1. MANAGEMENT PROCESS
Four-Step Public Relations Process

- Step 1. Defining Public Relations Problems
  - SITUATION ANALYSIS

- Step 2. Planning and Programming
  - STRATEGY

- Step 3. Taking Action & Communicating
  - IMPLEMENTATION

- Step 4. Evaluating the programme
  - ASSESSMENT

How are we doing or how did we do?

What is happening now?

Who should do and say? When? Where? How?

What should we do, say or change?
2.

ROLE OF RESEARCH IN STRATEGIC PLANNING
Problems with research

1. Many do not know how to conduct it and then use it
2. Some employers and clients do not think research is necessary
Research Benchmarks

Preparation

Implementation

Impact
Research Attitude

• Gather
• Process
• Transfer
• Interpret information
3.

DEFINING PUBLIC RELATIONS PROBLEMS
Attentive Listening

• Attentive listening
  • Catches rumours
  • Before they expand
  • And become part of the public perceptions of the organisation
The Judgment

• Problem definition begins with someone making a value judgment whether something
  A. Is wrong
  B. Soon could be wrong
  C. Or could be better
4.

PROBLEM STATEMENT
Problem Statement

It describes the situation in specific and measurable terms

• Details:
  
  A. *What* is the source of concern?
  B. *Where* is this a problem?
  C. *When* is it a problem?
  D. *Who* is involved or affected?
  E. *How* are they involved or affected?
  F. *Why* is this a concern to the organisation and its publics?
Problem Statement

A problem statement does not imply solutions or place blame

Communication is part of the solution, not the problem
Training is a solution, not a problem
Definition Process

- Begins with indicative problem statement
- Followed by investigation of the situation
- Leads to refining problem definition
- It results in a “fact book” with all gathered information
Content of Situation Analysis – Internal Factors

1. Statements of the organisation’s
   a. Mission
   b. Charter
   c. Bylaws
   d. History
   e. Structure

2. Lists, biographies, photos of
   a. Key officials
   b. Board members
   c. Managers etc.
Content of Situation Analysis – Internal Factors

3. Descriptions & histories of
   a. Programmes
   b. Products
   c. Services etc.

4. Statistics about
   1. Resources
   2. Budget
   3. Staffing
   4. Sales
   5. Profits
   6. Stockholders etc.
Content of Situation Analysis – Internal Factors

4. Policy statements & procedures related to the problem situation
5. Position statements (quotations) by key executives regarding the problem situation
7. Description of how the organisation currently handles the problem situation
8. Descriptions and lists of the organisation’s internal stakeholders
9. Lists of organisational media (two-way) for communicating with internal groups
Content of Situation Analysis – External Factors

1. Clippings from newspaper, magazine, trade publication, newsletter, online coverage of the organisation and the problem situation
2. Reports, transcripts & records of radio and TV coverage
3. Content analyses of media coverage and Internet sources
4. Lists of media, journalists, hosts, bloggers, Web sites who report news and features about the organisation and issues related to the problem situation
Content of Situation Analysis – External Factors

5. Lists of and background information on individuals and groups who share the organisation’s concerns, interests and positions on the problem situation

6. Lists of and background information on individuals and groups who oppose the organisation’s concerns, interests and positions on the problem situation

7. Results of surveys and public opinion polls related to the organisation and the problem situation

8. Schedules of special events, observances and other important dates related to the organisation and the problem situation
9. Lists of government agencies, legislators and other officials with regulatory and legislative power affecting the organisation and the problem situation

10. Copies of relevant regulations, legislation, pending bills, referenda, government publications and hearing reports

11. Copies of published research on topics related to the problem situation

12. Lists of important reference books, records and directories, as well as their locations in the organisation
Questions in the Research

1. How much do people use information in the problem situation?
2. What kinds of information do people use or seek?
3. How do people use information?
4. What predicts information use?
Researching the Stakeholders

- Tests the accuracy of assumptions about
  - Who they are
  - What they know
  - How they feel about the situation
  - How they are involved or affected
  - What information they consider important
  - How they use it
  - How they get it
## Strategic Implications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRATEGIES</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SO strategies</td>
<td>Build organisational strengths to take advantage of opportunities in the ext. environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST strategies</td>
<td>Build strengths to counter threats in the ext. environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WO strategies</td>
<td>Attempt to minimise weaknesses to take advantage of ext. opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WT strategies</td>
<td>Attempt to minimise weaknesses and environmental threats</td>
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5.

RESEARCH PROCESS
Ways of Doing Research

• Yourself – as a PR practitioner
• Outsourcing – hiring a research firm
The Process

1. Clear statement of the problem
2. Develop the research design
3. Specific methods of gathering, analysing and interpreting data
Informal (Exploratory) Methods

- (1) Personal Contacts
- (2) Key Informants
- (3) Focus Groups & Community Forums
- (4) Advisory Committees and Boards
- (5) Ombudsman (Ombuds Officer)
- (6) Call-In Telephone Lines
- (7) Mail & E-Mail Analyses
- (8) Web 2.0 Online Sources
- (9) Field Reports
Formal Methods

- Gather data
- From scientifically representative samples
- Using objective measures
- Help answer questions about complex situations
- Where informal methods fail
When Useful?

- Only if
  - The research questions and objectives are clearly determined
  - Before you select the research design
Questions

1. What information is needed and why?
2. What publics should be targeted when gathering data?
3. When are the findings needed?
4. How will findings be used?
5. How should the information be gathered? (The best method?)
6. How will the findings be summarised and interpreted?
7. When and to whom will they be presented?
8. Who will be responsible for assuring the good use of findings?
Identify general information needs

Specify how information will be used

Define publics or populations to be studied

Develop research objectives

Select research design

Make programme decision

Interpret results and findings

Collect and analyse data

Write research plan (include data analysis plan)

(Broom, Dozier, 1990: 97)
Methods

- (1) Secondary Analysis & Online Databases
- (2) Content Analysis
- (3) Surveys
  - (3a) Mailed Surveys
  - (3b) In-Person Surveys
  - (3c) Telephone Surveys
  - (3d) Self-Administered Surveys
  - (3e) Cross-Sectional vs. Tread & Panel Surveys
Summary

- Formal research methods follow the rules of science
- Use representative samples
- Employ systematic procedures
- Help describe reality accurately

RESEARCH FINDINGS + EXPERIENCE + JUDGEMENT =

foundation for defining public relations problems & designing programmes to address them