

Project: Moderator Notes for 2009 AAPA Public Relations Seminar

Date: June 17, 2009 v.1

Event: 2009 AAPA Public Relations Seminar
Date: Tuesday, June 23
Time: 2pm to 330pm (1.5 hours)
Location: Detroit Marriott at the Renaissance Centre, Detroit, Michigan
Panel: **Defining Your Goals & Objectives... Making Your Plan Achievable**
Length: 5-7 min introduction, 15 min each panelist, up to 35 minutes of Q&A
Audience: Knowledgeable port communicators

**This panel follows the keynote luncheon and precedes an afternoon break*

Defining Your Goals & Objectives... Making Your Plan Achievable

A common mistake when embarking upon a communications plan is to have ambiguous and overly ambitious ideas of what you want to achieve. This session will explore how to develop and set specific, achievable and measurable goals and objectives.

Panelists:

Rebecca Harris, Ph.D., GM Research and Measurement Strategist, GM Communications
Edward C. Hutchison, APR, Assistant Professor, Journalism, Central Michigan University
Michael Turney, Ph.D., ABC, Professor Emeritus of Communication, Northern Kentucky University & Independent Consultant

Thank you.

My name is Anne McMullin, and I'm the Director of Corporate Communications and Public Affairs for Canada's largest port, Port Metro Vancouver.

I'm very pleased to be here today to moderate the important discussion around defining communications goals and objectives. I'm going to start us off today by asking you a few questions. I'm then going to introduce our esteemed panel members, who will each speak for about 15 minutes. Following their remarks, I will moderate an open discussion and we will take questions from the audience.

So, to start you thinking about our topic, I'd like to ask you this question: How many of you have ever had a member of your executive team send you an email or call a meeting and say, "I need a press release. We've decided to launch a new program and we'd like to get the word out."?

Or what about this one: "I need a brochure. We've decided to proceed with a new road and rail alignment through this community and we think it would be a great idea to have something to hand out, if anyone asks."

Or even: "Can you arrange a news conference? Our Board wants to announce that we're making a sizeable donation."

New projects, new initiatives, new commitments — exciting stuff to be sure. But also, no thought to communications planning, consequences for communities, consultation with stakeholders, collaboration with governments or First Nations, or impact to corporate reputation. Let's just jump to tactics and get on with that news release, that brochure, or that press conference.

Now let's be clear: we would most likely get to these tactics eventually, and even fairly quickly — but first, we would **define** our overall communications objectives, **layer** our communications appropriately to the situation, **align** the pieces properly with other existing communications programs, and suitably **leverage** the opportunity, specifically and appropriately for our constituents.

In these situations — and we've all been in them — the first thing that always comes to mind to **communicators** is “Who's our audience?” But perhaps the more important thing we should consider first is “What are we trying to achieve from a communications perspective?” Because, as we all know, business objectives and communications objectives aren't the same thing.

Business objectives are about market share and profits and shareholder value. Communications objectives are about perceptions and reputation, belief and confidence.

So, what's the communications opportunity? We're really talking about three main communications objectives:

- Are you trying to create awareness?
- Are you trying to create a change in attitudes or perceptions?
- Or, are you trying to create a change in behaviour?

Another way to look at it is this: "What is the desired outcome?" or "What will happen if this all goes well?" That's your communications objective.

Once we define our communications objectives that act as the foundation for the rest of our communications plan, we can follow through to define our specific audience and craft the key messages that will resonate with that audience – not you! Then – and only then – can you determine specific tactics – like a press release, or a brochure, or a news conference.

So, how many of you have gone through some Executive interaction like I've described – just this week? How often is an initiative undertaken, or a project planned, before the company considers the impact on its reputation or image with its various and numerous stakeholders? Our business development and planning colleagues will always consider hard project costs, and even consider environmental impacts. But where does the social impact fit in – is it part of the planning? What do we need to do to succeed

in the project, not just from a business perspective but also from a communications perspective?

Because clearly, communications doesn't solve operational issues – but it certainly should inform operational and business decisions every time. Communication isn't about getting your message across TO your audiences – it's about creating understanding and relevance WITH your audience that will build support and even loyalty for your program or cause. Operations can't do this, but communications can. And we need to get involved at the beginning.

As communicators, we're not about press releases or brochures or news conferences, tacked on as an afterthought. We're about consistent corporate reputation management, from beginning to end. And the way we get there is through clearly defining our company's communications goals and objectives.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to introduce our three panelists. In alphabetical order, please welcome:

Dr. Rebecca Harris, Ph.D., GM Research and Measurement Strategist, GM Communications. Rebecca leads the Communications Research and Measurement Strategy team at General Motors Corporate Communications.

During her 20-year career at GM, Rebecca has held many different leadership positions. Most recently, she led the media integration efforts during major Communications events such as global auto shows, GM's Centennial in 2008, and numerous product showcase activities. Rebecca has also focused on integrating and extending outreach and coverage, specifically in the non-traditional automotive media space.

She earned a Bachelor of Science degree with a concentration in communication from Saginaw Valley State University, and a Masters degree in business with an organizational communication concentration from Central Michigan University. While working full-time, she completed her Ph.D in organizational communications from Wayne State University.

Dr. Harris will speak to us today about Integration of Mediums. Ladies and gentlemen, Dr. Harris.

Our next panelist is **Edward C. Hutchison**, APR. Mr. Hutchison is enjoying his third career, this time as assistant professor of Broadcast and Cinematic Arts at Central Michigan University. In that role, he also is responsible for the University's Integrative Public Relations program — a robust “major” with about 250 students. Mr. Hutchison's first career out of grad school was as a beat reporter for The Saginaw News. After eight years of covering police, fire and courts, he started his second career in the communications department of Dow Corning in Midland. In his 27 years there, he helped

guide the company's communications through the silicone gel breast implant crisis of the 1990's. Mr. Hutchison's mantra at Dow Corning was "Goal-Directed Communications" and he has carried this forward with his students at Central Michigan University. For his fourth career, well, who knows? Mr. Hutchison will speak to us today about Goal Definition and Planning. Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Hutchison.

Our final panelist is **Dr. Michael L. Turney**, Ph.D., ABC, Independent Public Relations Consultant, and Professor Emeritus of Communication, Northern Kentucky University. Dr. Turney's primary mission is to help people and organizations enhance their communication skills and become more effective in relating to others. It's what he's done for the last four decades. For much of that time, he was at Northern Kentucky University near Cincinnati, Ohio, but he also worked in mass media newsrooms, multi-media production studios, local museums, and state capitol offices. Dr. Turney is now taking advantage of early retirement from the university to do more writing, conference presentations, and community volunteer work. The six most frightening words he's ever heard are, "Someone from 60 Minutes is here." **Hopefully our panel discussion will be more comfortable than that experience.** Dr. Turney will speak to us today about How to Adapt. Ladies and gentlemen, Dr. Turney, and your panel.

Ed, we're going to begin with you, and you're going to speak about Goal Definition and Planning.

[Ed's turn to speak]

Thank you, Ed. Our next panelist, Dr. Turney, will speak to us about How to Adapt. Michael? ...

[Michael's turn to speak]

Thank you, Michael. Our final panelist, Dr. Harris, will discuss Integration of Mediums. Rebecca? ...

[Rebecca's turn to speak]

Thank you Rebecca, and thanks to our panelists for setting the stage for today's discussion about Defining Communications Goals and Objectives.

Maybe [x] I'll begin with you...

[Start the discussion!]

All right, we have 15 minutes remaining until our break. Let's take some questions from the audience...

[Take questions.]

OK, one final question please.

[Final question.]

Well, that's all the time we have.

Now since our discussion is the only thing keeping you from your afternoon snack, I'd like to thank you very much for your kind attention, and please join me in a round of applause for our panelists.

Thank you very much.