

This session is not about “tips and clips”. I can’t give you ideas that will generate winning news stories tomorrow.

But I can make a few promises. First, I’ll give you a different way of thinking -- even legitimizing - PR’s role in journalism. Yes, we have one, although many reporters might not want to admit it.

Next, I’ll give you a thought process that does yield results. Our company has had features or major coverage in FT, Forbes, Wall Street Journal and a cover story in Industry Week.

Finally, I hope to give you a way to organize everyone within your organization (or client’s company) to seek out the RIGHT kind of story ideas.

Some of this may be old hat to some, but the model is important to help train our clients and management about what we do.

Ordinary Products

- **Obscure/Esoteric**
- **Complex**
- **Mature**
- **Two-steps removed**

UNOVA is the world's second largest manufacturer of industrial bar code scanners and the world's third largest maker of machine tools.

Not everyone can be a Yahoo or an Intel. I assume that many of you in the room this afternoon can relate.

It is very challenging to find an appropriate news hook for the business press.

Why?

Most business coverage is focused on issues that touch a broad number of people. Stories that identify future growth markets and opportunities. Future value.

Mature industries with mundane products, far removed from consumers' experiences, are difficult to explain and become less relevant to the majority of readers.



One of the first things any marketer should do is to conduct market research. So I did just that.

Market Research

- What do reporters want?
- How do they perceive us?
- What do they like/dislike?

I wanted to understand the real wants and needs of our target audience: business reporters and editors.

What do they want?

How do they perceive us (as an industry)?

What do they like/dislike?

A blue presentation slide with a dark blue header containing the title "Market Research" in yellow. Below the title is a horizontal line of light blue dashes. The main body of the slide is a medium blue color and contains two bullet points in white text: "● E-Mail survey to 2,550 business reporters/editors." and "● 127 responses." At the bottom of the slide, there is a small red and orange gradient bar.

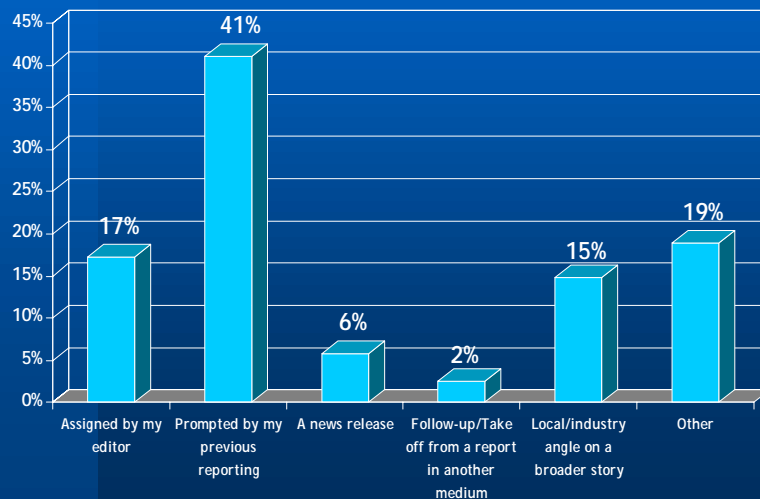
An electronic, e-mail survey.

2,550 reporters - about 127 responses -- within four days!

Many “failed delivery” addresses.

Note: the survey site is: www.inetsurvey.com

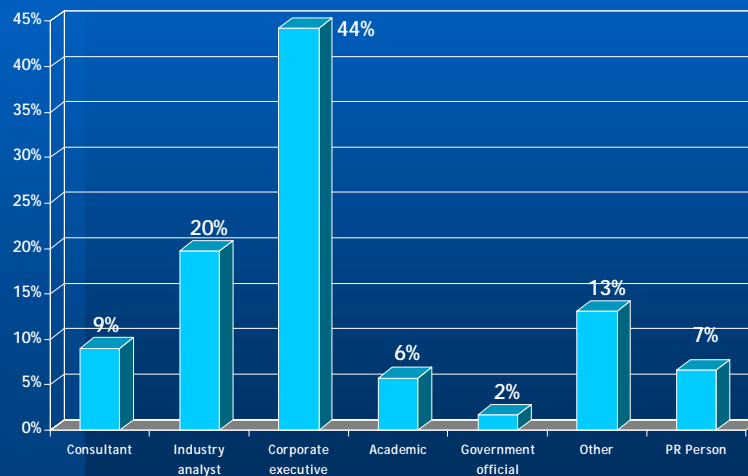
How did you decide to write your most recent, feature-length story?



58 percent said the story was either based on previous reporting, or assigned by their editor.

Only 6 percent were motivated by a news release.

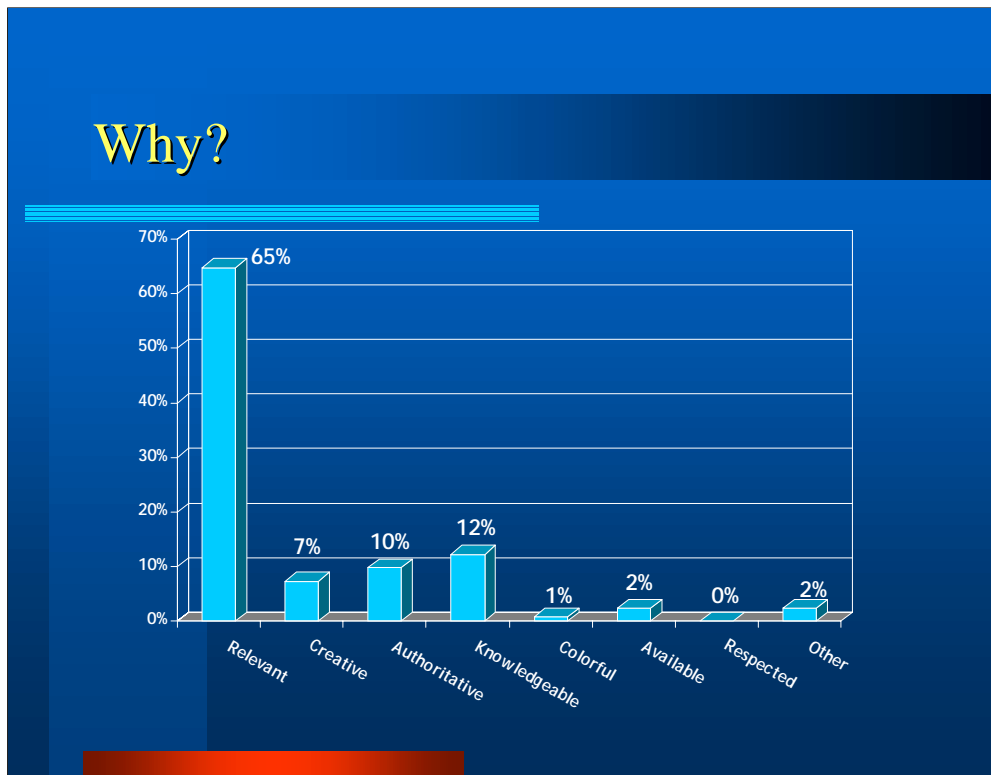
Who was the most useful source?



Corporate executives were overwhelmingly cited as being useful sources, followed by industry analysts and academics.

You'd expect this since these people are presumably the subject-matter experts.

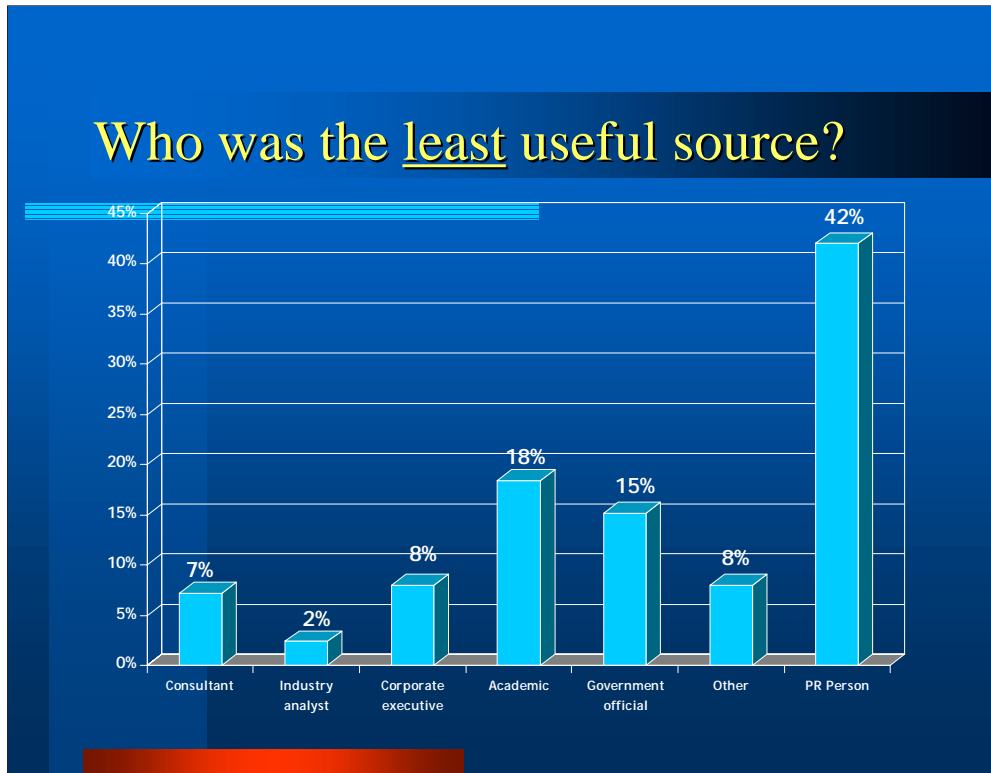
However, look over there on the end -- only 7 percent felt PR people were useful sources for story ideas.



Why?

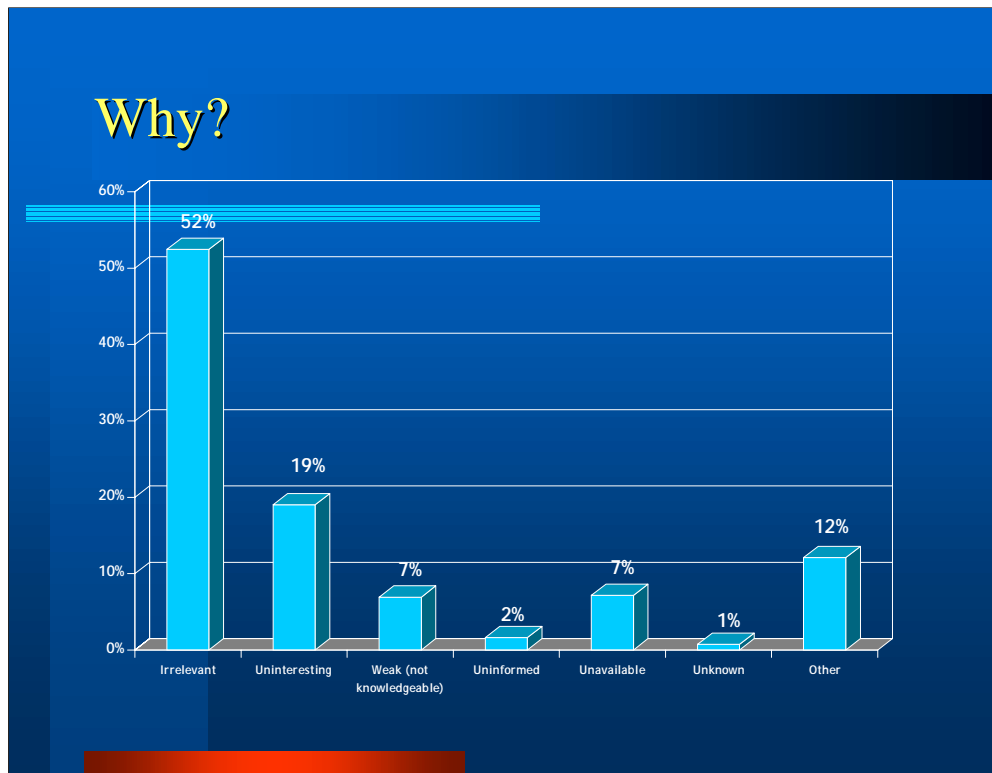
No surprises here...relevancy counts, especially when you're on a deadline!

It counts more than all others -- creativity, authority, timeliness - combined



So, who was the least useful source of ideas?

Ouch.



The polar opposite -

compare “our” score in the category cited as most important to journalists.

Like the CEO in the tape, the media has, rightly or wrongly, formed a negative image of people in PR

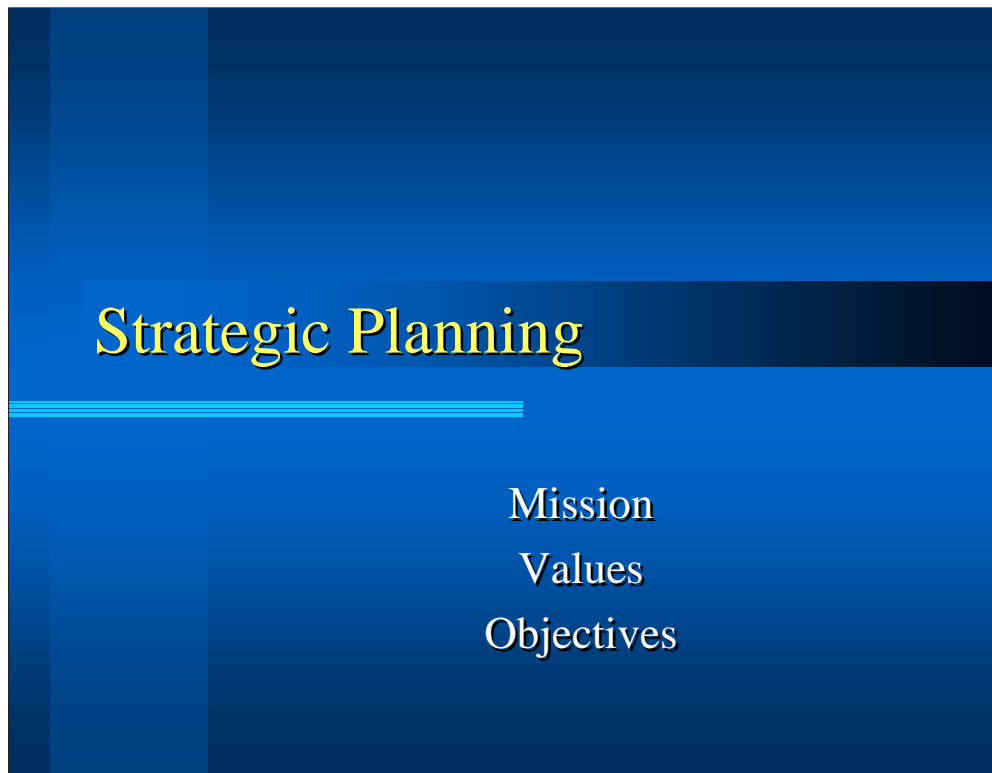
PR Has a Lousy Image

- Irrelevant
- An obstacle
- Defensive
- Overly commercial
- Aggressive

Understand the environment;
correct the perception.

Build: We need to understand the environment we are dealing in - reporters are already very weary about hearing a call from a PR person. They expect us to be irrelevant and therefore, not very useful.

It is up to us to figure out how to make ourselves better to correct this perception.



Our existing model is broken...

Our CEOs and clients expect results through force of personality. If they just **scare** you enough, perhaps then you will perform..

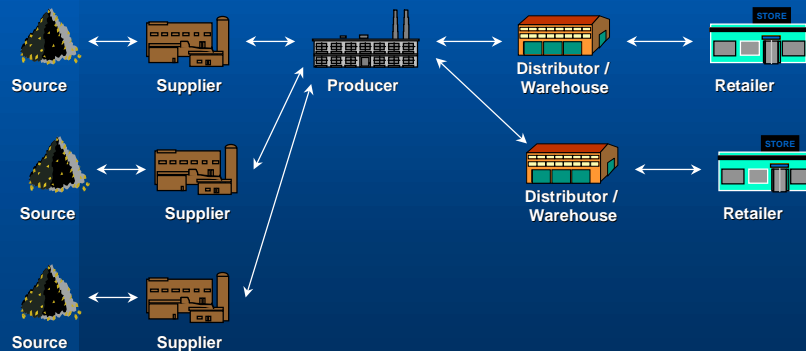
Unfortunately, the media that doesn't work that way.

We need to give our management and clients a different way of looking at PR...

A model they will respect and contribute to...

What Is a Supply Chain?

- A network of suppliers and customers working together to meet the needs of customers.

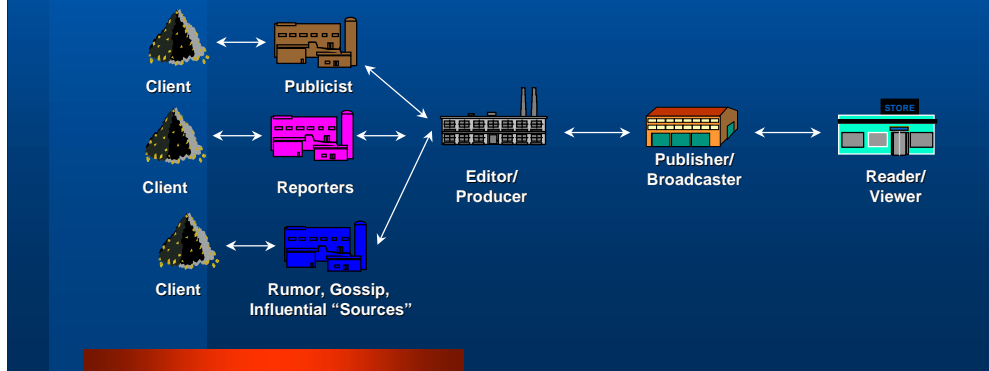


How many people have heard the term “supply chain” management.

The best definition I’ve seen is “A network of suppliers working together to meet the needs of end customers”

What is a Media Supply Chain?

- Clients, publicists and journalists honoring shared responsibilities to deliver timely, accurate, objective and compelling stories to a target audience.



In a sense, PR is part of a larger effort to supply timely, interesting information to a targeted audience.

Although they'd hate to admit it, we have a lot in common with reporters:

We both procrastinate and thrive on tight deadlines

We have tough bosses that don't appreciate what we do.

We both want to get in the paper with "great" placements.

The basic issue: we need them a lot more than they need us.

We have to fully understand the needs of our customer to earn their respect and loyalty.

You

- The last line against corporate stupidity.
- Create “buzz”.
- A reality check: an “outside insider”.
- Responsible for everything left *unsaid*.

A catalyst for ideas that benefit the reputation of your organization.

You are a reality check for the organization: the insider that **MUST** think about the perceptions of the outside world. Only the CEO has the same kind of perspective.

You are the last line against stupidity - dumb statements or actions that seem perfectly logical within the confines of the Ivory Tower, but will detract from the reputation of the company.

You create **BUZZ**, the intangible sense of momentum and positive energy that identifies winners.

You are responsible for inferred perceptions. Most of what company's say is discounted anyway -- you must work to identify what the issues are and correct negative perceptions.

Finally, you are a catalyst for great ideas - to identify new targets of opportunity and to help the company achieve results.

Implications

- **Relevance**
- **Substance**
- **Excitement/drama/humanity**
- **Insight and perspective**
- **More insight into the daily needs of the media.**

Journalism is a filtering operation; news sources that get to the point quickly and have useful, relevant information are prized and used over others that waste precious time.

Substance: Know what you're talking about. Understand what the technology does, how it works, who uses it, why they use it. But don't go overboard assuming everyone else cares as much as you do!

Add a little element to this - human interest/drama:

A turnaround
Succession planning

Project a customer-oriented attitude toward reporters..

Get to know them personally
Respect (and compliment) their work - be a fan
Respect their deadlines
Understand their likes/dislikes
Don't keep them on the phone too long at deadline

Writing

(product development)

Are You Relevant?

- How are you related to a story in The Wall Street Journal? The New York Times? BusinessWeek?
- What's the next logical "follow-on"?
- Can I relate my client/company to that issue?
- Can I pitch it in less than 90 seconds?

A great exercise for identifying story ideas is to pick up an issue of the Wall Street Journal or the Times or Business week and identify at least 3 logical, follow-on stories where you have an important story to tell.

Ask yourself: Can I relate my story to the reporters previous story?
Am I legitimately and realistically part of an emerging trend?

Can I pitch it in 90 seconds or less on the phone, or in a one-page letter?

Getting to Why

- Why did a customer buy?
- Why did we design it that way?
- Why is it priced like that?
- Why do we sell this way?

Become the subject-matter expert for your company or client - a useful, relevant source.

Always ask why.

PR is the universal donor of the organization. We have permission to knock on any door and ask dumb questions.

Dig deep to uncover meaning, new ideas, greater relevance with the daily business press.



Use your Carte Blanche to meet everyone in the organization.

Ride with field sales people.

Visit plants, suppliers, distributors.

Take a finance guy to lunch.

Write up your notes.

Relate what you've heard to the day's news...

Be sure to manage expectations

Trends

- **Products**
 - Ingredients that are noteworthy
 - New manufacturing methods
 - Designs that break the mold
- **Customers**
 - New markets
- **Sales trends**
- **Hiring and training**

Understand what is going on in your business - the inputs and outputs.

What industries supply your company?

What industries does your company supply?

- Wood chips - paper prices
- Cutting tools -> Machine tools
- Insulation materials

- Hiring & training; novel solutions to labor shortages

Make Technology Relevant

- Focus on people
- Customers anecdotes
- Employees
- **Obscure Benefits > Important Benefits**

If you aren't a "dot.com", find out something else that makes your company tick.

Focus on the daily struggles of people to create success.

LAN at NASA - 6 year effort

Precision machining = emissions control

Be Concise

- **“If you can’t explain to a waitress in an all-night restaurant why your technology is important, then you have a real problem.”**

Arno Penzias, Bell Labs
Fortune Magazine

Writing Checklist

- Clarity
- Benefits
- News
- Puffery
- Accuracy
- Brevity

Clarity: Does the release use plain, jargon-free English to describe the benefits of the product or service? Are the benefits self-evident, or can they need to be explained in a clearer way?

Benefits: How will a product feature or technology benefit a customer or user? Merely describing a technological feature is not sufficient.

Brevity: Is the writer concise? Does he or she avoid redundant or awkward phrases?

News: Does this news release include "cues" in the headline showing why the news is truly important and worthy of editorial consideration? Is it the first, least, most, lightest, strongest, longest, shortest available?

Puffery: Does the release use too many subjective, promotional phrases that undercut credibility and objectivity? Is it ad copy or editorial? Does it include gratuitous quotes or empty phrases?

Accuracy: Are our statements true and would they hold up in court? Do we make statements about future business assumptions which require a 'forward-looking' statements disclaimer warning.



Pitching

Pitching

- Know your customer
- The relationship is more important than the story...or your client.
- Sell one idea at a time, but always have several ideas in development
- Focus on core; then non-core and “the rest”

Know the reporter from his or her previous work.

Read past stories - know for sure the story is appropriate. It is especially useful to say “...I was reading the last three stories you wrote about manufacturing and job creation, so I thought this would be ideal.”

A golden Rolodex is worth more than any job. Don't pitch trash or give into poor judgement (or management pressure) to pitch marginal stories.

Never pitch more than one at a time, or explain time pressures up front.

Focus on forming relationships with core reporters (Business Week, Fortune, Forbes, Wall Street Journal), then non-core and finally “other” books.

Media Lists

- **Search for actual, by-lined coverage, not just names**
- **80/20**
 - Mail 80; follow-up with most likely 20
- **Send releases to “thought-leaders”**

Keep a file of interesting coverage by reporters - use this to form your media list.

We have about 80 reporters that I really care about - mostly in the major business press. We don't target broadcast primarily because we can merchandise the clips.

I only follow-up with 20 of those reporters on a regular basis.

Finally, we identify the “opinion leaders” who always seem to be ready for quotes. People such as David Cole from the University of Michigan, who is always quoted for auto industry developments.

The more they know about us, the greater the chance we'll get a referral.

Conclusions

- **Understand and respect your “customers”**
- **Focus on big picture**
- **Measure qualitative results**
- **Train management; demand their support**
 - **Sophistication**
 - **Patience**
 - **Participation**

Your customers' needs come first, not your clients'

Focus on the big picture - don't become distracted with mundane, esoteric, inward imperatives. Most people just don't care. It's a losing battle to make them.

Measure performance based on qualitative impact (such as content analysis or circulation-weighted column inches). Don't fall for the advertising equivalency trap!

Finally, train your management or clients. Demand their enlightened support

- Sophistication
- Patience to find good story ideas a form relationships
- Participation to identify story ideas that meet the business press' criteria.

PR is Responsible for Company Reputation

- PR supports and defends the corporate mission
- Responsible for broad, long-term interests.
- Customer focus must guide all activities
- PR does not take management dictation (in the form of a press release)

PR Supports and Defends the Corporate Mission: Against inconsistent or muddled messages, unseemly or desperate behavior, or plain bad taste.

Include, broad, long-term key messages that every release, interview, speech and event must support -- not just in PR, but in marketing, sales, product development, etc. This is a leadership issue - not a PR issue.

Customer focus must guide all activities. Whatever you do must be perceived as a service to your counterparts in other areas of the company. And that perception will be helped immeasurably by developing personal, face-to-face relationships with them.

PR is not in the business of writing jargon-filled, techno-babble reports. It's in the business of delivering a few, clear, consistent key messages in a format that is well-written, understandable and likely to be picked up by your key media.

PR is the only position (outside of CEO) with the primary responsibility of looking out for the broad interest and reputation of the company. You'll give the most value for your paycheck on the days when you stand up for the company's interest against the demands of peers, superiors, etc.

Explaining PR to Engineers

$B_C > 0$ and $B_P < 0$,

$\uparrow P_R \cong \uparrow E \cong \uparrow \$$ ($R^2 = 0.67, F=25$) \therefore ,

$P_R(B_P) > P_R(B_C)$

Explaining PR to Engineers

- **Customers already know the benefits. Prospects do not yet know the benefits.** $B_C > 0$ and $B_P < 0$

- **PR helps educate prospects, converting them into customers** $\uparrow P_R \equiv \uparrow E \equiv \uparrow \$$

therefore...

- **PR must repeat benefits in concise, jargon-free, non-technical language until all prospects have bought the product!**

$$P_R(B_P) > P_R(B_C)$$