Public relations is peppered with military language and this is particularly the case when dealing with campaigns. The talk is of strategy, champions, ammunition and tactics. You may dislike these analogies but be careful not to dismiss them.

We might define a ‘campaign’ as a military operation designed to achieve a specific objective. Similarly, in the world of PR, a campaign involves working in a planned and proactive manner towards a specific goal.

To plan a campaign, you need to think through why you are engaging in it – how are you going to conduct it and how will you position your different forces? The hope is, of course, that if your campaign is planned and implemented properly, you will succeed. There are few things more satisfying in public relations than winning a campaign.

There are many different types of PR campaign, from long-term perception changing and awareness raising to short-term product launches and events. Regardless of the type of campaign, all require good planning to focus effort, improve effectiveness, encourage a long-term view within the organisation, reduce the chances of mishaps, manage conflicting priorities and keep the campaign proactive. A well-planned campaign also helps to demonstrate value for money.
1 Campaign objectives

The importance of planning

If you identify a good issue on which to campaign, it may be tempting to think ‘Why not go for this now?’ This is especially true if you worry that the enthusiasm you and your colleagues have today may not last if you have to go through a sustained period of detailed planning. But it is so easy for a campaign to be stalled by lack of research, confusion on your objectives and messages, initiatives being started by a group of individuals rather than as a team and little idea of what it will cost.

When working on a campaign, you need to focus on the importance of:

- good planning to focus your campaign on very precise targets and not to waste time and effort on less important factors
- drawing up a detailed campaign plan with clearly outlined objectives to keep the team on track
- planning long term, so that the campaign fits perfectly with an organisation’s overall business strategy
- building teamwork, so that all involved in a campaign feel a sense of ownership. This also avoids individuals pursuing their own initiatives that do not fit in with your overall strategy
- putting good research and analysis at the centre of your operations, so that all your work is backed up and open to scrutiny
- making a financial case for your campaign by setting out the implications in terms of staff resources and spending in your plan.

Identifying objectives

Before any thought can be given to launching a campaign, it is essential to analyse how your organisation is currently perceived, especially among key external audiences. This will have a major impact on your choice of issue and the timing of your campaign.

Too often, the initial reason for planning a campaign is not sufficiently discussed and understood. Yet it will affect every aspect of your plan. Key motives may be to protect your organisation’s reputation or to help shape the perception of the head of the organisation. The aim may be to promote a specific service or product – or perhaps to influence the views or behaviour of a specific audience. Whatever the motive, initial discussions should conclude with a definite idea about what you want to achieve. From that point, it becomes far easier to make a start on the campaign plan.

It is also worth considering whether your campaign is essentially proactive or reactive. Is it seeking to promote something or to limit the damage already done? In a perfect world, all campaigns would be proactive. But in reality, public relations practitioners are likely to spend a significant percentage of their time trying to repair a reputation or improve the perception of a service, product or decision.
Below are a few examples of the reasons for planning a campaign:

- To promote an international property consultancy’s pan-European network to the global business community.
- To promote a homeless charity’s plans to demolish and rebuild its city centre buildings to a varied audience, including local residents and the statutory authorities.
- To repair the reputation of a leading estate agency following damaging allegations in the media.
- To protect the reputation of a company planning to close its small factories around the UK.
- To promote the wearing of safety helmets by young cyclists.
- To shape the perception of the new chief executive of a major company.

As you can see, the objectives vary widely. The good news is that much of the work in planning a campaign involves a similar range of public relations functions. The bad news is that you can never take a campaign plan off the shelf and use it for the next one by simply giving it a new title. Each plan must be meticulously tailored.

**Strategy and tactics**

Two key elements of any campaign plan are your **strategy** and your **tactics**. Your strategy justifies your choice of issue; it outlines your overall objectives, key messages and target audiences. Your tactics relate to the PR actions or initiatives you propose to implement to achieve your overall strategy.

Understandably, it is easy to confuse these two elements because there is a grey area between what should be included in your overall strategy and what can be described as tactics in a campaign plan. An easy way to decipher which is which is to think of strategy as theory and tactics as practical actions.

To illustrate this further, if your key objective is to raise awareness of the dangers of cycling without a safety helmet, that is part of your strategy. One of your tactics would be to produce a briefing paper comparing the severity of accidents between those wearing and not wearing a helmet.

**The road map of a campaign**

When planning a campaign, you need to answer the why, what, how, who, when and where questions. Each one of these questions must be addressed in your plan. For example:

- Why is the campaign being launched?
- What is it designed to achieve?
- How are you planning to achieve it?
- Who will be involved?
- When are you planning to carry out the activities?
- Where will they take place?
One simple template for a campaign is called POSTAR, which stands for:

- **P**ositioning
- **O**bjectives
- **S**trategy
- **T**actics
- **A**dministration
- **R**esults

In practice this can be extended into a typical campaign road map which should cover all the necessary elements:

- Initial planning: how is your organisation currently perceived by internal and external audiences?
- Key issue: what will you be campaigning about?
- Key objectives: what do you want to achieve?
- Key messages: what will you communicate?
- Target audience/s: who do you want to influence?
- Media targets: which media will influence your target audience/s?
- PR tactics: what do you plan to do?
- Communication materials: how do you plan to communicate your messages?
- Spokespeople and champions: who will communicate your messages?
- The team: who will do what?
- Resources: how much will it cost?
- Evaluation: how will you measure outcomes?

There are a number of different planning models in use within PR, so it is important to make sure the model you choose is appropriate for the campaign you are planning.

**Initial planning**

Put simply, you need to know where the organisation is at the moment before you can decide where you want it to be.

The first step is likely to involve internal analysis of the organisation, its market and its audiences.

The challenge – which will reoccur throughout the planning process – is to avoid the trap of telling people what they want to hear. It is tempting to write a glowing analysis of your own or your client's organisation, dismissing opponents as irrelevant or ineffective. To avoid this, it is essential that you stand back and observe the organisation with the cool, calculating eye of an objective spectator.

Your analysis should be realistic and backed up with evidence or sourced material and statements should be substantiated. You should strike a neutral tone so that you are not overly negative or overly positive.

To begin researching the organisation, it is essential to analyse such issues as its:

- mission
- strategy over the next few years
- position compared with others in the same field or sector.
A few examples of issues for which PR teams could devise campaigns are outlined below.

- A pan-European property investment company plans to turn a loose alliance with a similar New York-based global company into a formal merger. Your research needs to cover what both entities do at the moment, i.e. their structures, corporate philosophies, services and leadership. It should also include an analysis of the main competitors.

- A homeless charity plans to extend its day centre and health facilities, and to offer more transitional housing arrangements. Your research needs to cover the charity’s relationship with statutory funders, such as central and local government, donors and local residents.

- A professional body plans to promote its expertise in trade union laws. Your research needs to cover the views of members, key influencers in the same field and other organisations offering similar expertise.

**PEST analysis**

A PEST analysis is an excellent way to analyse the external environment affecting your organisation. PEST stands for the following factors:

- **P**olitical
- **E**conomic
- **S**ocial
- **T**echnological

Issues such as legislation, the economy, lifestyle choices and the latest technologies should all be considered.

A typical example of a PEST analysis is shown in Table 6.1.1.

**Table 6.1.1: A PEST analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>POLITICAL</th>
<th>ECONOMIC</th>
<th>SOCIAL</th>
<th>TECHNOLOGICAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Trade union legislation; change of government; EU directives; EU trade levies</td>
<td>Interest rates; cost of living; fuel duties/prices; Eurozone stability</td>
<td>Lifestyle choices; consumer buying trends; youth unemployment; income distribution</td>
<td>Impact of new technologies; new discoveries; government investment in research and technology; private sector investment in research and technology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EPISTLE analysis**

If your organisation is likely to be affected by further macro-environmental factors, you can expand PEST into an EPISTLE analysis. This adds categories for:

- **E**nvironmental (or green) information
- **I**nformation
- **L**egal (or regulatory) issues
Every organisation is different so try not to become too wedded to the two acronyms on the previous page. For example, perhaps your planning process needs to include a section devoted to cultural differences? In any case, once you have identified the key factors, they will need to be put in order of priority.

2 Widening your external analysis

You now need to include the stakeholders in your analysis. The list is likely to be quite long and may include some of the following:

- staff, customers or clients
- owners/shareholders/investors
- suppliers
- regulators
- legislators
- the media
- campaigners/activists.

Each category of stakeholder should be treated as a separate audience that needs to be considered in your campaign plan. While the key objectives and messages will be the same, the manner of that communication and the tactics used will vary.

As part of your research, you must try to establish the views of each target audience on the issue before you start work on the campaign plan. A media-monitoring exercise and analysis should give a balanced report on coverage within a relevant time frame. It should cover both traditional media, i.e. print and broadcast, and new media such as relevant websites, blogs, Facebook and other social media sites. In addition, there are other ways to gauge the views of specific audiences such as surveys, perception audits and the opinions of your own contacts.

Media profiling

How the organisation is reflected in the media, both traditional and new, will be a key influence when you are drawing up the campaign plan. Many public relations departments use established online research services such as Factiva and LexisNexis, although nowadays most of the information you require can be found via search engines such as Google.

Such an exercise may reveal several thousand pieces of information. To make this manageable, concentrate on the media which is likely to be targeted in your campaign, i.e. the media outlets that influence your likely target audiences. It is advisable to set an agreed time frame, for example researching media coverage over the past two years. However, if significant events have affected the organisation’s reputation a few years further back, such as a takeover, factory closures or funding cuts, it would be worth extending your research.

Do not be tempted to carry out this exercise until you have done some initial research into the key issues involving the organisation and have identified the main opponents. This research will provide you with key words and names that you can type into search engines, in addition to the organisation’s name and
leadership, e.g. the CEO, which should generate relevant coverage. With social media sites, it is important not to confuse the volume of traffic with influence. Focus on those websites or blogs relevant to your organisation, main competitors and the sector, especially if they involve criticism from staff, customers or clients.

Once you have accessed this vast range of material, you must organise it carefully so that it can be used to help plan the campaign. The best way of doing this is to choose a representative sample from the media coverage which, overall, tells the story of how the organisation is regarded by its audiences to date. The usual format is to:

- write the headline
- state the media outlet
- write a sentence or two which gives the gist of the coverage
- provide the link to the coverage for those who want to access the whole story.

Achieving the right balance is quite a challenge.

Once that is complete, it is advisable to draft an executive summary or analysis to introduce and justify your selection.

This should not take up more than a page or two and should identify any especially supportive or hostile coverage. For example, you might mention that most print media has been hostile, while more balanced coverage has appeared in certain periodicals and on broadcast media. Follow this with some relevant and balanced examples to justify your comments.

SWOT analysis

A SWOT analysis is a commonly used internal exercise, where a small team analyses the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the campaign. This works well only if all those involved are realistic about what to include in each of the four categories.

Look at the SWOT analysis shown in Table 6.1.2. It was carried out by a city centre homeless charity, planning to redevelop its day centre and offices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths:</th>
<th>Opportunities:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improve facilities for service users, staff and volunteers</td>
<td>Secure the medium-term future for the charity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eradicate outside queues to the day centre</td>
<td>Reduce running costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide a dedicated service entry for deliveries</td>
<td>Provide better health and counselling facilities for the homeless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet latest environmental regulations and regulations that cover disabled access</td>
<td>Attract more volunteers to back up the staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weaknesses:</th>
<th>Threats:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promises of financial backing are only provisional</td>
<td>Some local residents will use it to campaign for the charity to relocate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involves demolition of Victorian facade</td>
<td>Many residents will be affected by disruption while work is underway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disruption and transitional arrangements while work underway</td>
<td>Ward councillors may back opposing residents because they face elections in 18 months’ time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs to undergo a prolonged planning process for outline and detailed permission</td>
<td>Planning permission may be rejected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Such an analysis is a regular exercise for management teams. It provides a useful tool for generating further debate on the case for a campaign as well as helping those involved to work effectively as a team.
Surveys/questionnaires

There are numerous systems for measuring opinions and attitudes and just as many dedicated organisations that promote these systems, and carry out research on behalf of others. But there is also a strong argument for public relations practitioners to carry out such work themselves, albeit using less sophisticated methods. For example, you can identify unexpected but relevant opportunities, ideas and problems by running a small focus group made up of staff members drawn from very different levels and parts of an organisation. Similarly, a short online survey for service users or customers is likely to generate some useful comments.

Perceptions audits

A perceptions audit is another form of survey carried out by public relations practitioners. It involves conducting an audit of a specific audience to gauge the present perception of an organisation or issue and to gather ideas about where it should be going. The exercise involves the following:

1. Select a representative sample of a target audience, for instance, political influencers. Make use of existing contacts to encourage participation.
2. Use a short questionnaire of around five questions, preferably covering both the present perception and at least one question relating to what the participant thinks the organisation should be doing, its priorities, etc. in the future.
3. Promise confidentiality to encourage realistic answers.
4. Avoid attachments, which some participants may be unwilling to open.
5. Send questionnaire out – usually via email, with an encouraging, personalised message.
6. Set a realistic deadline for replies, ringing up those who have not replied well before it.

If you have been in touch with your contacts personally prior to sending out the questionnaire, you are more likely to achieve a higher reply rate. Make sure that you have a reasonable number (which will vary, depending on the number of people you approach and the type of information you are trying to find out) of responses in order to draw up a respectable analysis.

While this exercise takes time and effort, it has some very real advantages. A frequent challenge for public relations practitioners is how to deliver home truths to their employers or clients without offending them. It can be easier to do this via an audit rather than it appearing to be the opinion of the PR practitioner. For instance, in audits carried out for a leading non-governmental organisation, the replies indicated great praise for its past work but a clear message that it had ‘lost its way’ since the end of the Cold War; an audit for a mobile phone company revealed the high level of annoyance that such companies did not collaborate in the siting of mobile phone masts.
The case study below provides an example of how you might carry out such a perceptions audit.

Case study
A perceptions audit for an animal welfare charity might involve sending a questionnaire to a representative group including long-standing donors, newly signed-up members, front line staff and local politicians (MPs and councillors). They would be asked, where relevant, to grade how satisfied they are with the charity and its work on a score of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest. They would be encouraged to add to their comments as fully as possible. Sample questions would include:

1. How do you regard the charity’s work?
2. What do you regard as the charity’s key priorities?
3. Do you think that the charity is campaigning on the most relevant issues?
4. What issues do you believe the charity should focus on in the next five years?
5. Do you advocate any specific changes in the law to improve the well-being of animals?

Colleagues and contacts
In addition to these more formal exercises, it is important to make use of the views and knowledge of their colleagues and good contacts. For example, what are the views of front line staff providing services or products on a daily basis? What do the volunteers at a charity think? What about those who have influence in a specific sector of business and who are supportive of your organisation?

Care needs to be taken that you never convey confidential information, so such conversations should never take place without the knowledge and approval of more senior executives.

Activity
The information on the previous pages should help you to choose the key issue for your campaign with confidence. If, however, you have not been involved in the preliminary work, you should be prepared to ask why that issue has been chosen and to be taken through the work done so far. This will help you when researching the background and contributing ideas for the campaign.

Obvious questions include: Why now? Has a similar campaign been run before? If so, what happened? Is there a proposed timescale?
3 Key objectives

The objectives hierarchy

When setting campaign objectives, you need to consider an organisation’s overall strategy. Most entities, whether a public company, service provider or a charity, are likely to have strategic plans stating what they want to achieve within the next year and, usually, the next five years. It is essential to work with this plan when drawing up your campaign objectives.

There is a hierarchy of objectives within the strategic plans:

- The CEO or leadership will be responsible primarily for setting key objectives for the organisation overall.
- Different departments or sectors will have their own specific objectives.
- The public relations or communications department will, in turn, have their own specific objectives.

There should be a trickle-down effect so that all the organisation’s plans and activities work in harmony. But it is essential never to lose sight of the organisation’s overarching objectives so that you can avoid a conversation like that seen in Figure 6.1.1.

It is important to agree a list of objectives for the campaign, including realistic expectations and timelines. Having the input of the team responsible for delivering on these objectives can be helpful in fostering a sense of ownership for the plan, which can help motivate the team.

SMART objectives

To prevent the problems above, it is advisable to test all stated objectives against a set of criteria. Are the objectives SMART?

- **S**pecific
- **M**easurable
- **A**chievable
- **R**ealistic
- **T**imed
6.1: Devising strategic plans for PR campaigns

- **Specific**: if the objectives are too general, it becomes hard to measure them. They need to be related to something that public relations practitioners can actually deliver. For example, an obvious objective may be: ‘To raise the profile of the organisation…’; yet this does not state how the objective would be judged to be a success or otherwise. It is far better to write: ‘To secure at least ten pieces of positive media coverage in the trade press within the next 12 months’. More specific objectives like this also make it far easier to plan your campaign, as you know precisely how success or otherwise will be judged. Keep your list of objectives to between two and four to make sure your campaign is focused.

  When setting objectives, be aware of what you can realistically achieve with your campaign. An objective such as ‘to raise the share price by £XX’ or ‘to raise the company’s profits by £XX’ may be aligned with the organisation’s overall objectives, but these will be achieved by a combination of factors and functions (e.g. sales) rather than a single campaign.

- **Measurable**: if you do not have a clear idea about what you are expected to deliver, it will be hard to measure and evaluate the results within a certain time frame.

- **Achievable**: if there is little chance of achieving the objectives, you diminish the reputation of public relations and its practitioners by signing up to them. Many practitioners have a recurring nightmare in which their boss waves a piece of paper while saying ‘But you said here that you would achieve this!’.

- **Realistic**: there must be a link between an organisation’s aspirations and what, in reality, can be achieved – especially within a certain timescale. It is important to be realistic when setting objectives. This means that even though the in-house team may be convinced of the message of the campaign, the chances of the message being accepted outside the organisation need to be accurately assessed. However, realism should not stifle ambition. It may not be enjoyable to dampen the expectations of colleagues who try to give you over-ambitious objectives, but they are likely to be less than supportive if you accept those objectives – and then fail to deliver.

- **Timed**: the success of most campaigns is generally achieved through the ‘drip drip effect’; the culmination of a lot of well-planned individual initiatives and actions taken over a period of time. While it is necessary to monitor the campaign’s progress and set some milestones, it is important to state a certain time when the overall campaign will be properly evaluated. But, again, be realistic and resist setting short-term deadlines for delivering a specific outcome.
Key messages

There is an art to drafting key messages and a host of acronyms to guide you. US President Bill Clinton famously used KISS: Keep It Simple, Stupid!

More polite alternatives include CCCMP which means the message must be:

- Clear: clearly written in easily understood words
- Concise: not be more than a few sentences
- Contrasting: different from what others are saying
- Memorable: easy to remember
- Persuasive: true, believable and convincing

And: SLASIB: Say Less And Say It Better.

Others talk of slogans, sound bites and mantras. But in every case, what is required is a short number of messages used consistently in all communications and most likely to be welcomed by your audiences.

One of the hazards when planning a campaign is the amount of information that interested parties want to see included in campaign materials. The exercise of stripping it down to the bare bones of something not much longer than a headline in The Sun can be an intellectual challenge.

Messages can take a wide variety of forms as they need to be relevant for their specific audiences. Your organisation may already have an advertising slogan or short mission statement and you must be careful not to contradict it when drafting messages specifically for the campaign.

A small number of key messages are usually agreed once the plan is quite advanced; you need to wait until you have a reasonable idea of your audiences and also the most relevant facts and figures. Make sure that all proposed messages are voiced out loud – what may look good on a computer screen can sound ineffective or odd when spoken. And, before they are finalised, it is worth testing your messages confidentially on colleagues and reliable contacts.

The final test of a good message is for it to be received positively and – the ultimate aim – to hear it repeated back to you.

Target audience(s)

‘I want to communicate with everyone – this is such an important issue!’ This is a common aspiration of anyone planning a campaign. However, great care needs to be taken when identifying your target audiences. This is easier to achieve if the audiences are broken up into a range of categories as shown in Figure 6.1.2.
Stakeholder mapping

It is crucial that you identify anyone who could have an influence on your organisation. These people are generally called stakeholders, implying that they will have a stake in the success or otherwise of your organisation. Hopefully, most of them will already be identified as part of your overall public relations strategy. But it is still important to review the list, and then consider how you will involve them in your campaign plan and set them out in order of priority.

Once you have these broad categories, you can break them down into more specific audiences. For example, ‘local community’ can be broken down into sub-groups such as local residents (within a specified area), community leaders and ward councillors, local businesses/retailers and local schools.

If you are targeting those with a financial influence on your organisation, sub-groups could include the business community, investors, shareholders, analysts, regulators, politicians and customers/clients.

For many campaigns it is essential to break down a specific audience in terms of demographics. This list is likely to include:

- age
- sex
- social group
- marital status
- income
- occupation
- education
- location
- social values
- special interests, such as travel or the theatre
- religious beliefs
- ethnicity.

Given increasingly sophisticated marketing tools and new technologies, information about people’s habits and lifestyles can be added to this list. For instance:

- main sources of information (i.e. reading or viewing habits)
- shopping habits
- leisure and sports activities
- urban, suburban or rural location
- means of transport.

If, for example, you were promoting a specialist, organic sausage not sold in supermarkets, you might target middle-class women shoppers in a range of prosperous market towns who read *The Daily Telegraph*. If you were promoting a new electronic financial information service, one of your target audiences might...
be young traders in the City of London who gain most of their information and news via particular websites and blogs. A fundraising campaign by a children's charity might focus on home-owning, elderly women with private pensions, encouraging them to remember the charity in their wills or through legacies.

As far as possible, you should try to identify each audience's likely attitude to your organisation. Are they likely to be friends, opponents or neutral (i.e. of no firm opinion one way or another)?

A campaign is usually launched after an organisation has gone through some trauma or crisis. Whatever it involves – passengers affected by a series of transport cancellations, customers alarmed by a food product health scare, local residents affected by a proposed new road – there will still be audiences which fall into one of the three categories above.

This scenario is very obvious in political campaigns. Political parties go to great trouble to identify whether local residents are likely to vote and, if so, whether they are for them, against them, undecided, or simply won't say. Once they have a fairly clear picture (it is an inexact science), their strategy will be as follows:

1. Take care of existing voters, keeping in regular touch, asking their views, etc.
2. Work hard on the undecided voters, as it is this group – often called swing voters – who are likely to make the difference between losing and winning.
3. Aim to build momentum, increasing activities and contact in the build-up to polling day.
4. Many political strategists may decide to ignore those identified as supporting another party, although there is a case for actively encouraging them not to vote for the main opponent.
5. A GOTV (Get Out The Vote) strategy – this involves tactics such as an early morning leaflet distribution on polling day and a ring around, email or text message to encourage all those who said they would support the party to go out and vote.

Similar tactics in identifying friends, foes and undecideds can successfully be adapted for public relations campaigns.

**Opinion formers**

Opinion formers are a key audience which can influence other target audiences. It is vital that they are not neglected. Their role can be crucial to the success or otherwise of a campaign. It may be someone with a specific status in a community, a highly respected analyst in a sector of the business world or an academic who is regularly interviewed on a specific subject.

Gaining the support of such people, having them publicly back your campaign to win over a wide audience on your behalf, is every PR practitioner’s dream.

At this stage of the planning process, it is important to identify key opinion formers or influencers who can affect your organisation's reputation. You are unlikely to be starting from scratch because, hopefully, your organisation will have included some opinion formers in previous projects.
6 Media

Media profiling

The media is a key channel of communication with your audiences. Up until the 1990s, it was relatively easy to match a relevant media outlet to each audience. There were: the national newspapers; a strong tradition of regional and local newspapers; a vast range of magazines, often with a relatively stable readership; a handful of television channels; a widespread network of public and independent radio stations. Factors such as the growth of electronic information systems and non-terrestrial TV stations, mirrored by the decline in newspaper sales, have changed that environment forever.

However, there is plenty of good news. In many ways, it has become easier to take each target audience and work out which media outlets are likely to influence them most. This is due to more sophisticated marketing systems used to draw up audience profiles.

The economics of the media also mean that many outlets, especially newspapers and magazines, have cut back on permanently employed journalists. In turn, this means that many outlets, especially consumer, lifestyle and leisure magazines and newspaper supplements, rely heavily on public relations-inspired materials.

Take it further

Read through the supplements of a major Sunday newspaper, such as The Sunday Times or The Mail on Sunday, and count the number of stories that are likely to have been generated primarily by public relations activities.

First steps

Most public relations departments will have an existing media list. For the purposes of your campaign plan, it is always worth studying this before you start to identify your media targets more precisely.

This list splits the media into different types, as shown in Table 6.1.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspapers</th>
<th>Magazines</th>
<th>Television</th>
<th>Radio</th>
<th>Online</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>international</td>
<td>lifestyle/consumer</td>
<td>international</td>
<td>international</td>
<td>digital channels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pan-European</td>
<td>trade/sector-specific</td>
<td>national</td>
<td>national</td>
<td>websites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>national</td>
<td>business</td>
<td>business-focused</td>
<td>specialist</td>
<td>blogs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regional/local</td>
<td>specialist</td>
<td>regional</td>
<td>local</td>
<td>social networks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now you can make a start in researching suitable media outlets from the relevant categories above.

For example, if you ask many CEOs where they most want coverage, they are likely to mention the Financial Times, The Wall Street Journal (Europe edition) and the business sections of the main broadsheet newspapers. They may mention a couple of magazines, such as Business Week, or perhaps one highly regarded specialist...
magazine in their specific sector, such as *Estates Gazette*, *Investors Chronicle* or *Third Sector*. It is more likely to fall to you and your colleagues to think beyond these more traditional outlets.

Your organisation should already have a well-developed list of journalists and media outlets (and their contact details) with whom they have good working relationships. It is crucial that this is a ‘living document’, i.e. that it is kept up to date and added to or amended on a regular basis. There are few things that irritate journalists more than to receive material or calls from PR practitioners on subjects they have not been involved in for many months – or even years!

To help decide which outlets to include, you need to know the up-to-date circulation/audience figures and trends, i.e. are they gaining or losing their audiences? The three bodies below have properly audited figures:

- The Audit Bureau of Circulations publishes the circulation figures of UK newspapers and magazines ([www.abc.org.uk](http://www.abc.org.uk)) and also reports on trends, together with other useful information.
- Broadcasters’ Audience Research Board ([www.barb.co.uk](http://www.barb.co.uk)) provides measurements of UK TV audiences.
- Radio Joint Audience Research ([www.rajar.co.uk](http://www.rajar.co.uk)) provides similar information for all the radio stations.

**Second steps**

You must also identify as precisely as possible the sort of people who access each media outlet. Fortunately, their advertising departments will have detailed audience profiles.

What is harder to identify is the precise section of a media outlet that is popular with a target audience and which is most likely to be absorbed – rather than merely glanced at. For example, while a certain television programme may attract a sizeable audience, or a certain newspaper sells well, it does not follow that a large percentage of those audiences takes notice of all the content.

Public relations practitioners talk about vertical and horizontal media. Vertical media focuses on a specific interest area, such as sport, fashion or a business sector, while media described as horizontal tends to be more generalised, perhaps covering general news, consumer issues or business. Therefore, it is always an excellent idea to prioritise some vertical media outlets in your plan.

For instance, if you are preparing a campaign plan for a social housing charity, you might include publications such as *Third Sector*, *Inside Housing* and *Community Care*. If your plan includes commercial property, you are likely to consider *Estates Gazette* and *Property Week*.

While you can identify relevant media coverage by carrying out extensive research online, it is also a good idea to scan the ranks of publications in a large newsagent from time to time. You can spot what is new or attracts your attention. It is also helpful to spend some time watching people picking up and scanning publications.

It can be particularly difficult to achieve coverage in, for instance, the general news sections of the media. This is partly because much of their content will focus on areas of controversy and dispute, while the journalists working on them are likely to...
to be less appreciative of contacts from PR practitioners. But you are likely to have far more success in the bulk of the media, which attracts a more specific audience.

By now, you should have a reasonable list of possible media targets. Now it is important to spend some time answering the questions below:

- Have they carried relevant stories before?
- Do you have any existing contacts there?
- Do colleagues have existing contacts there?
- Do you know which journalists are in-house and which are freelance?
- Are there particular journalists who have worked on stories that show some knowledge of your campaign issue or have impressed you with their reporting on a similar issue?
- If relevant, do you have their features lists?
- Do you know the deadlines and best mode of contact?

Digital media

It is almost certain that, as part of your campaign, you will want to communicate with your target audiences via various new media technologies. They are transforming the way we communicate with each other and it is hard to predict the strength of their influence in the future. But it is also worth remembering that these technologies should be exploited to the advantage of your campaign, not adopted just because they exist. Additionally, at present, there are certain demographics that still have limited access or experience in using digital media.

The more obvious avenues are likely to include:

- a dedicated campaign website, linked to the organisation’s website
- links to relevant websites for ease of access
- a regular blog, which can help maintain the interest of a target audience in your campaign issue
- social networks, such as Twitter, which can be useful in raising awareness of a campaign issue
- YouTube, which can be used to highlight events and other visual activities.

But, to date, digital media has not replaced conventional media – although this could change within a few years.

Face-to-face communications with the media

Another area to factor into the media target section of your plan is the scope for direct contacts with relevant journalists. Take some time to identify:

- conferences and seminars
- exhibitions
- other events, such as receptions, business breakfasts or corporate functions.

The key is to analyse which journalists, relevant to your campaign, are most likely to attend and the opportunities for meeting them. The events may include: conferences held by the professional bodies or trade unions in a particular sector, such as health, education or the legal profession; events run by bodies representing the corporate sector, such as the CBI (Confederation of British Industry) and the Financial Times; or major gatherings, such as MIPIM, the international real estate exhibition and conference.
Checklist
Summary of top tips for effective media profiling:
✓ Make use of existing good media contacts.
✓ Make a ‘dream’ list of which media you especially want to cover your campaign.
✓ Check the internet for any new media outlets, especially electronic ones, that may be relevant.
✓ Take a realistic view of the likely reaction of journalists on the media outlets you list to your ‘story’.
✓ Then make three or four further lists, in descending order of priority for media coverage.
✓ Match each outlet to a specific target audience.
✓ Identify specific sections of media outlets, e.g. travel or personal finance sections.
✓ List specific journalists or media in which coverage is likely to encourage other media to be interested.
× Do not rely too heavily on size of audience: the likelihood that coverage will make an impact on target audiences and not merely be scanned is usually more important.
✓ Think outside the box: discuss with colleagues some of the most unlikely media outlets to be interested and see if you can think up ways to interest them.

Portfolio activity 1.1, 1.2, 1.3
As part of your assessment for this unit you will need to demonstrate that you understand how strategic plans for public relations are devised. Focusing on a proposed PR campaign you will work on within your role, or a proposed campaign case study agreed with your tutor, create a presentation or report that covers the following points.

1 Describe the overall planning model for the campaign. Identify how the campaign team assessed the current position, the objectives for the campaign, the method and tactics to be used and the resources needed.

2 Assess the current (i.e. starting) situation for the campaign, explaining how market intelligence (e.g. internal and external analysis) supports this assessment.

3 Discuss the SMART objectives of this campaign and analyse how successfully the campaign meets the objectives.
Further reading

Books


Websites
The Financial Times [www.ft.com](http://www.ft.com)
Economist Conferences [www.economistconferences.co.uk](http://www.economistconferences.co.uk)
The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) [www.cbi.org.uk](http://www.cbi.org.uk)
Conference Alerts [www.conferencealerts.com](http://www.conferencealerts.com)
International Association for Measurement and Evaluation of Communication (AMEC) [www.amec.org](http://www.amec.org)
Chartered Institute of Public Relations [www.cipr.co.uk](http://www.cipr.co.uk)
Public Relations Consultants Association [www.prc.org.uk](http://www.prc.org.uk)

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