

# PRJ 2000: NEWSWRITING FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS



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Prince George's Community College

# PRJ 2000: Newswriting for Public Relations

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This text was compiled on 04/16/2026

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## About the Author

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Joel Whitaker has been writing news stories since the seventh grade when he founded his middle school newspaper. He went on to be a reporter and editor at the world's oldest high school daily, the Shortridge Daily Echo; the Indiana (University) Daily Student, where he was a reporter, city editor and editor-in-chief, and, professionally, he has been a reporter and editor at the St. Petersburg Times, Wall Street Journal and Philadelphia Bulletin. He publishes high-priced subscription newsletters for senior executives and has judged national journalism contests, during which he has evaluated more than 1,000 entries.

Whitaker joined the Prince George's Community College faculty in October 2014 stepping in during the middle of a semester to replace another adjunct who quit with no notice to take a GS-13 job at the Pentagon. He teaches Fundamentals of Communication, Interpersonal Communication, Public Relations Techniques and Newswriting for Public Relations. He has spoken at the national convention of the National Communications Association.

Whitaker earned his bachelor's degree in business journalism from Indiana University's Kelley School of Business, his master's in journalism from the Indiana University Graduate School, and his J.D. degree from Temple University School of Law. He recently completed a Graduate Certificate in Communication Studies from Indiana University.

## Introduction

I'm a writer. I sold my first national magazine article when I was 16. Writing paid most of my college expenses. When my father lost his job during my junior year, it got me a researcher job working for a congressman who was writing a book. A story I wrote as a college "stringer" for the Associated Press appeared in newspapers worldwide, including Hong Kong. It enabled me to win a national collegiate newswriting award. I've been writing for money ever since that first magazine article.

I'm also an editor. I didn't set out to be an editor. I set out to be a reporter. But my bosses, beginning with my very first job, saw in me something that said I had the essential skills needed to plan, organize, and direct coverage of news. So that's what I've done most of my life.

For a bit less than a year, I also wrote editorials. To be honest, I found editorial writing less satisfying than reporting or editing, so I left that part of the journalism trade. But during those few months, I learned how to craft an argument in print to sway peoples' minds.

Writing is a foundational skill. I challenge you to name one job where being a better communicator wouldn't be a benefit.

This is a course on writing, specifically writing for public relations. But in many important respects, it is also a course in journalistic writing because the two are very similar. Working as a newspaper reporter or a radio/tv reporter traditionally is an excellent stepping stone to a satisfying career in public relations. It still is.

The difference between the two is largely a matter of whom you serve. In journalistic writing, you write for the broad general public. Some journalists, however, don't write for the broad general public; instead, they write for a niche market, such as the automobile industry or the beer industry. But they still follow all the rules and principles of journalistic writing.

In public relations writing you are writing on behalf of a client. Usually, you are hoping to get the client's message in front of members of the broad general public. Sometimes to do that, you have to go through "gatekeepers" – editors who decide whether your message is worthy of being in their publication or on their airwaves, or on their online news publication.

Other times, you may be writing for a publication the client distributes to some or all members of the general public. Many hospitals, for instance, produce quarterly magazines of 16 to 20 pages that feature two or three stories about a patient who had a dread disease or serious injury, was treated at that particular hospital by a particular doctor, who recovered and now is living happily. The hospital's objective in producing that magazine is get you to be a patient.

In still other cases, you may be writing for an internal audience, usually employees, but in the case of colleges also alumni. The goal when writing for employees is to reinforce the idea that they are working for a fine college. The goal when writing for alumni is to maintain the bond between the college and the student that existed when the alum was a student. If that bond is maintained, the college expects three things will happen:

--First, the alum will encourage young people to attend his college, so it becomes a "free" marketing effort.

--Second, the alum will make donations to the college over time. Sometimes these donations can be substantial. An Associated Press reporter upon his retirement made a \$1 million commitment to the journalism program from which he got his start 40 years earlier.

--And third, the college expects the alum will come back to campus for football, basketball, softball, soccer or any one of a multitude of other sports.

In all cases, the key to success is writing. To put it quite bluntly, if you cannot write, and write well under pressure, your prospects in either journalism or public relations are substantially diminished.

But how do you learn how to write? Fundamentally, writers write. They write a lot. They read books about writing. In short, they work at writing and at becoming better writers. That's where a course like this is useful even to an experienced writer. I have never taken a writing course or writing workshop that I haven't learned something new or been reminded of something I learned but forgot long ago.

For someone who is not an experienced writer, a course such as this gives you the basic framework in which to begin to develop your skills.

The second things writers do is read. They read a lot. They read different genres. But especially they read fiction and nonfiction works in the area in which they focus. If you were a journalist on Dec. 7, 1941, the morning when Japanese bombers attacked Pearl Harbor, how would you report the news? Read how the Associated Press reported the attack:

## AP WAS THERE: 75 years ago, the AP reported on Pearl Harbor

A couple of explanatory comments: A “Flash” is rarely used by news services. It is intended to alert editors to news of extraordinary importance. In 1941, when AP stories were distributed by teletype machines, it would have been preceded by the sound of eight bells ringing, followed by eight bells.

A “Bulletin” is also rare, but not nearly as rare as a Flash. A Bulletin is used to communicate breaking news of major importance. When a flash is issued, it is immediately followed by a bulletin, as in the example above.

The result of the attack would be a transformation of American society. Here’s the front page of *The Wall Street Journal* the next morning:

**Weather Forecast**  
New York City and vicinity: Breezing clear; rain or snow, tomorrow; clear, Wednesday; rain, Thursday; rain or snow, Friday; rain or snow, Saturday; rain or snow, Sunday. Temperature range in 24 hrs. High 34, Low 26.

**THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.**  
Copyright, 1941, by The Wall Street Journal, Inc.

VOL. CXVIII, NO. 133 NEW YORK, MONDAY, DECEMBER 8, 1941 SEVEN CENTS

**War With Japan—**  
**U. S. Industry's Sole Objective: Arms Production Speedup; Congress Prepares To Act; Tax Bill Will Be Rushed; N. Y. Stock Exchange To Open As Usual Today, Says Schram**

**Washington Sees Fight on 2 Oceans And 3 Continents**  
Expects Half the National Income Allocated to Army, Navy—Labor Registration  
More Curbs on Vital Materials

**What's News—**  
Business and Finance  
**TRADE REPERCUSSIONS** of the outbreak of hostilities between Japan and the United States were being felt in the nation's entire economy today. The development meant the shutdown of the productive machine in many maximum output for the army's detail. Congressional leaders prepared to start work immediately on a new tax program to supply the needs of war. The U. S. Treasury halted all financial, commercial transactions with Japan.

**Stock Exchange** business will be conducted as usual today, President Schram announced last night. However, officials will be on hand early to take any steps necessitated by Japan's attack on our Pacific possessions.

**Strategic materials** which this country imports from the Far East are now in plentiful supply here due to precautions taken for such an emergency as has now developed. But the conflict will mean tighter restrictions on goods of Pacific Ocean origin. Tin and rubber—the most important products of the Far East from an industrial standpoint—will be particularly affected.

**Air forces** of formidable size have been assembled at strategic points in the Far East by the United States and Allied powers over the past few months. Reinforcements are being supplied steadily from the United States of the American aircraft industry which is beginning to hit the full production stride.

**Japan's oil needs** are almost entirely met by imports from the United States.

**World-Wide**  
**Japan Attacks Hawaii, Okinawa and Iwo Jima, Reported Heavy.**  
**Japan Declares War on U. S., England**  
**Roosevelt to Address Congress Today**  
**Japan Envoys Deliver Reply to U. S. R. Hull**  
**Radio Closes Gates on All Fronts**  
**British, Axis Tanks in Major Battle**

**JAPAN ATTACKED** U. S. bases at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, and Iwo Jima, the island of Iwo Jima in the Philippines, tonight the most serious assault on American territory since the outbreak of war on the U. S. and Britain.

**U. S. Army and Navy** were immediately alerted to Japanese attacks in many and various ways. The U. S. Army and Navy were alerted to Japanese attacks in many and various ways. The U. S. Army and Navy were alerted to Japanese attacks in many and various ways.

**We Have a Duty**  
[An Editorial]  
The business and financial discussion which customarily appears on this page in Monday morning's issue of The Wall Street Journal was written Saturday evening and given to the compositor yesterday. As the galley proof reached the editorial room, press association wires carried the fact that the Japanese had attacked Hawaii.

**All Consumption Curbs Due To Be Stiffened; Scarcity List Will Grow**  
Vast Supplies of Ships and Shells, Bombs and Bombers, Oil and Gasoline Will Be Essential; Outline Already Visible

**By William F. Kerley**  
War with Japan means industrial revolution in the United States. The American productive machine will be reshaped with but one purpose—to produce the maximum of things needed to defeat the enemy. It will be a brutal process. It implies rationing, almost fantastic stimulation for some industries; strict rationing for others; inevitable, complete liquidation for a few. War with Japan will be a war of great distances. Thus, certainly in its preliminary stages and probably for the duration, it will be a war of the sea and the air. This means unlimited quantities of ships and shells, bombs and bombs, oil, gasoline. Eventually, it also means an army dwarfing the present military establishment—5 million, 8 million. It's a guess. But that will come later.

**Market Officials Expect No Trouble**  
But Will Be On Hand Early to Study Situation—SEC to Meet This Morning

**By R. H. McDONNELL**  
The New York Stock Exchange plans to open for business as usual this morning.

**New, Stiffer Levies Now Are Imminent**  
Will Fall on Firms, Individuals Alike Based on How Much Must Traffic Bear

Here’s a link to one of the two lead stories that morning which made clear “the war in Europe, Asia and Africa,” which had been raging since 1938, “is reaching out to engulf the United States completely.”

### Washington Sees Fight on 2 Oceans and 3 Continents

Notice in both the AP reporting and the WSJ reporting how clear and concise the information is. (To read the Wall Street Journal story, you’ll need a subscription. Student subscriptions are \$4 a month and come with a bunch of extra benefits. Details are [here](#).)

And here’s a link to [The Washington Post front page](#) the day after the attack.

The essence of journalistic writing is to focus on what’s important, to write, to use short sentences and simple words (which usually are simpler), and short paragraphs. Journalists and public relations professionals overwhelmingly use AP Style. Why? Because it enables you to tell your story quickly and concisely.

That’s what you’ll learn in this course. How to tell your story quickly and concisely.

## What You Will Learn from This Book

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The development of the internet has changed the professions of journalism and public relations dramatically. And yet, the fundamentals of newswriting remain the same.

This book is written primarily for second year college students. Second year students often are undecided between journalism and public relations. The truth is, students need to be prepared to perform well in either field. This book meets that need.

It covers:

- The basics – lead paragraphs, inverted pyramids and the 5 W's
- AP Style
- Basic Editing Rules
- Feature Writing
- Introduction to public affairs writing
- Writing for earned media, paid media and owned media
- Developing a public relations strategy
- Working as a sports information director
- Corporate communications
- Media Relations
- Employee Communications
- Social Media
- Investor Relations
- Planning and writing video news releases
- Blogging
- Social media
- Using video for public relations
- Creating a writing portfolio
- Job Opportunities

Because the best way to learn a skill is to do a skill, nearly every chapter includes practical exercises, intended to ensure students have mastered that subject. Most of the examples in the book occurred within five months of its publication.

Feedback from instructors and students is welcome. Email me at [whitakjx@pgcc.edu](mailto:whitakjx@pgcc.edu).

-- Joel Whitaker

## Licensing

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## CHAPTER OVERVIEW

### 1: Why This Book?

1.1: Why This Book

1.2: What is News?

1.3: Journalistic Writing Is Different

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## 1.1: Why This Book

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Suppose four years ago you had opened a small brewpub, a small place where you brewed beer, served it to customers along with “pub food” and enabled customers to fill “growlers,” essentially large jugs with which you can use to take your beer home. Business was good, and a couple of years ago, you made arrangements with a contract bottler to bring a mobile bottling line to your brewery and to bottle some of your beer which you then sold through local food outlets and taverns. Business got even better. In fact, it got so good that your little brewpub couldn’t keep up with demand. So, you decided to build a larger facility with more brewing capacity, an in-house bottling line, and a larger tasting room. The state’s economic development fund even gave you a tax break to help cover the cost.

You’d want to tell people in the community about it, wouldn’t you?

Or, suppose you run a local arts center in Iowa, and next weekend is going to be a really special event – the U.S. Marine Band, the “President’s Own,” will be performing on your stage. You’d want to tell your community about the upcoming performance, wouldn’t you?

Or, suppose you run a law firm, and you just won a multi-million dollar lawsuit against a major corporation. You’d want to tell the world about it – the people in your community, other lawyers, the people in the plaintiff’s community, about it, wouldn’t you?

Or, suppose you ran Johns Hopkins Hospital in 1987. For the very first time by anyone, anywhere, Dr. Ben Carson had separated infant conjoined twins. You’d want the world to know about it, wouldn’t you, because it would enhance the reputation of Johns Hopkins University and Johns Hopkins Hospital.

Or, suppose you run an automobile dealership, and you promote someone, or you hire someone. You’d want others in your community to know about that, wouldn’t you?

All of these situations are newsworthy. But except for Johns Hopkins Hospital, it is by no means certain the other business would have a public relations person on the staff. Getting the word out might be up to the owner, or general manager, or perhaps a secretary.

Even if you retain a public relations firm, you need to know enough to be able to approve – or disapprove – the proposed **news release** when they bring it to you. A news release is the usual way news media expect to receive information that people hope to have published. Whether you are an entrepreneur or an experienced public relations practitioner, your success in getting the word out may very well depend upon the news release you send to the media.

But, you may ask, do you really need to rely on the media – on newspapers, on radio, and on television? Won’t social media let you get the word out just as effectively? Yes, you need the media. And no, social media doesn’t get the word out as effectively. Only one-in-four U.S. adults get local news from either social media (25%) or websites and apps (26%). Among the nine types of providers, social media stands out as a primary access point for only one: online forums or discussion groups such as community Facebook groups or Nextdoor. What are the odds that any of the examples cited above would be seen in a community Facebook group or on Nextdoor? Here’s the most telling statistic: Of those who get local news from daily newspapers, only 13% access them through social media, compared with 30% who primarily use websites, apps, or email – and 54% who primarily use print newspapers.

The same study found that of those who prefer to get their local news online, nearly twice as many prefer to get it from a news website or app as from social media.

(Pew, 2019).

This book will teach you how to write news that gets published in media that matters – whether that media is a news website, a newspaper, TV, social media or radio. The principles it teaches are applicable whether one works as a public relations professional or one is a small entrepreneur trying to get noticed on your own.

### References

Pew Research Center (2019, March 26). Overall, social media plays a moderate role in local news.

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## 1.2: What is News?

It may seem that news is, by definition, something new. But, new to whom? If you've been closely following a politician's campaign, his call for new taxes – or his call for major tax cuts – may be old hat to you. But to someone who hasn't been following the campaign, it's news.

This has important implications. It has been a convention in print journalism to say something happened “yesterday” or “this morning.” The idea was to let readers know you're on top of the news. But if your publication may be delivered several days after the event, is it necessary to say, “yesterday”?

When Bernard Kilgore was transforming *The Wall Street Journal* from a 34,000-circulation financial trade paper to the nation's first national newspaper, one printed in eight printing plants around the nation, Kilgore decided the word “yesterday” not only wasn't necessary but shouldn't appear since a substantial number of subscribers got their papers by mail, and it might be two days or more after the publication date before they would receive it. It's still news to them if they hadn't known about it, he explained. That tradition continues today. News doesn't happen “yesterday” in the Journal. But it can happen on “Tuesday” or “Wednesday,” etc.

There are some pretty specific criteria by which journalists decide whether to even consider publishing something:

1. Is it new?
2. Is it unusual?
3. Is it interesting or significant?
4. Is it about people?
5. Is it local?

### ***Is it New?***

If it's not new, it cannot be news. The assassination of President Kennedy is unusual, interesting and significant and about people. But it occurred in November 1963 – nearly 60 years ago. So, it cannot be news. But if some new evidence turned up definitively linking the Soviet Union to the attack, that would be news.

### ***Timeliness is the Art and Essence of Journalism***

The test of “is it new?” bears an important caveat for those hoping to get something in the paper or on the air. Don't send it after the event. At least not to radio and television nor to daily publications of any kind. Weekly or monthly publications or programs may be just aga-ga about the celebrities who attended your reception and the fact they were served some famous sparkling wine, but 24 hours after the event, the dailies don't care. At all.

### ***Is it Unusual?***

In 1927, Douglas Corrigan was a mechanic who worked on Charles A. Lindbergh's “Spirit of St. Louis,” the aircraft in which Lindbergh crossed the Atlantic to everlasting glory. Corrigan wanted some of that fame himself, and in 1938 he bought a 1929 Curtiss Robin aircraft of a trash heap, rebuilt it, modified for long-distance flight. In July 1938 he flew the single-engine aircraft nonstop from California to New York, winning national attention because the press was amazed his rattletrap aircraft has survived the journey.

After his flight plan to cross the Atlantic was denied by aviation officials, who considered it a suicide mission, Corrigan took off on July 17 from a Long Island airfield to fly back to the West Coast. A few minutes later, he made a 180-degree turn and vanished into a cloud bank. Twenty-eight hours later, Corrigan landed in Dublin, Ireland, got out of his plane and exclaimed, “Just got in from New York. Where am I?” Authorities promptly suspended his license.

Newspapers immediately dubbed him “Wrong Way Corrigan,” he became a national celebrity and a mob of autograph seekers met him on the gangway of the ship that carried him and his crated plane back to New York. His license suspension was promptly lifted.



Los Angeles Herald-Express, Aug. 5, 1938. **Appears uncopyrighted; not in LOC Catalog of Copyright Entries 1938 Periodicals Jan-Dec New Series Vol 33 Pt 2.** Picture from History's Newsstand Blog <http://blog.rarenewspapers.com/?p=7724>

Corrigan's stunt met all our criteria: It was new; relatively few had soloed a single-engine aircraft across the Atlantic. It was unusual, for the same reason. It was interesting it was about people, and, at least for New York media, it was local.

#### ***Is it interesting or significant?***

A story about a dog biting a man would not be printed in any newspaper or aired on any station, unless the dog had rabies. There are tens of thousands of dog bites in the U.S. every day. But a story about a man biting a dog – that's entirely different. It's interesting, unusual and about people.

Likewise, not all stories are about Very Important People – or those who consider themselves to be VIPs. A city bus driver, who has driven the same route for the last 25 years, may be the subject of a story in a newspaper or on radio or TV.

Why, you may wonder, would someone who has “just” driven a bus for 25 or more years rate a story when someone whose accomplishments might be more significant might not? The answer is simple: Over the last 25 years, thousands of people have ridden his bus. For many, he's become a friend if not a member of the family. They have moved out of the neighborhood and no longer take the bus, but they will still want to know. Interestingly, this type of story often gets higher readership or viewership numbers than a more “significant” story featuring a local politician pontificating.

#### ***Is it about people?***

Have you ever read a news story loaded with statistics?

News editors will rarely publish stories that aren't about people. Even those about some new discovery about the Incan or Mayan civilizations are, in a sense, about people, since we naturally tend to wonder what our ancestors were like. It's even more interesting when we discover they were just like us in some respect – perhaps they drank beer, or had similarly shaped pottery.

But generally, statistics-laden stories are deadly dull. On Dec. 16, 2022, the Bureau of Labor Statistics published a story that began: There were 5,190 fatal work injuries recorded in the United States in 2021, an 8.9-percent increase from 4,764 in 2020. The fatal work injury rate was 3.6 fatalities per 100,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) workers, up from 3.4 per 100,000 FTE in 2020.

If that isn't enough to put you to sleep, consider the story's discussion of fatal workplace injuries among Black or African American workers:

The share of Black or African American workers fatally injured on the job reached an all-time high in 2021, increasing from 11.4 percent of total fatalities in 2020 to 12.6 percent of total fatalities in 2021. Deaths for this group climbed to 653 in 2021 from 541 in 2020, a 20.7-percent increase. The fatality rate for this group increased from 3.5 in 2020 to 4.0 per 100,000 FTE workers in 2021.

This may be an important story, but any news editor would assume it would get very little readership. Suppose, however, the lead paragraph began this way:

For most of his working life, John Jones had gone into enclosed spaces. He knew they could be dangerous. But on this summer day, Jones went into a vat at X Brothers to clean it. A few minutes later, his coworkers outside the vat noted it seemed to be quiet. They called Jones once, twice. Increasingly frantic, they called him again and again, even as they also dialed 9-1-1.

Jones was one of 653 Black or African American workers fatally injured on the job in 2021, an all-time high in a year that saw a 20.7% increase in fatalities for this group.

Do you see the difference? Simply reporting numbers is dull and will quickly lose the reader. But using a person to illustrate the number brings depth and meaning to the story.

Stories about people are always more interesting than stories about numbers.

### ***Is it local?***

Were you planning to drive to Indianapolis, Ind., last summer to see Trace Adkins perform at the Indiana State Fair in August? Would you do it even if you were a fan? I didn't think so. Would you consider driving to Baltimore to see Trace Adkins if he was performing at the Maryland State Fair, assuming of course you're a fan?

That's just one example of the importance of localness in news. It explains why even though 28 people died in a massive winter storm in Buffalo, N.Y., and surrounding Erie County, the event received relatively little coverage in the Washington, D.C., area – and even less elsewhere. The New York Times buried the story on page A-11. USA Today didn't mention it on page 1, nor did the Los Angeles Times. But the Los Angeles Times did lead with “Worst Wildfire Hazard Zone Swells,” a story obviously important to Southern California residents, while the woes of a snow-bound New York city a continent away had little impact on readers.

While it's not one of our criteria for news, the size of the media is also an important consideration. A story involving a small business in Bowie, Md., is more likely to get good play in the Bowie Sun, the Bowie Patch, or the Bowie Banner than in the Washington Post. But that doesn't mean you should not send it to the Post; you should. just expect more from your localest media than from regional media.

What about radio or TV? If your story has the potential for a good visual, by all means, send it to local TV stations. But understand this: a 30-minute newscast typically devotes 8 minutes, a bit more than 25% of a half hour, to advertising that pays the bills. That leaves only 22 minutes for all the other stories – the local crime report (“if it bleeds, it leads”), fires, the mayor and city council, etc. Your odds of getting your story on TV may be small – and if it's about the promotion of a salesperson to sales manager, nil – but if it has w

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## 1.3: Journalistic Writing Is Different

*The red sports car was cruising along the two-lane road on Maryland's Eastern Shore, the driver absorbed in the music of Ed Sheeran, the British popstar who had become the first artist to reach 100 million followers on Spotify. As Sheeran belted out "Castle on the Hill," he took his hands off the wheel and began "dancing" to the music spewing from the car's speakers.*

*(Five paragraphs later) The music enveloped him, and he didn't notice the semi rounding the curve ahead in the other lane. Slowly, his car began to drift to the left. Still, he didn't notice. There was no grassy median or "Jersey barrier" to let him know he had left his lane.*

*It was only when the semi sounded its horn just seconds before the crash that the driver knew he was in peril.*

*The two vehicles hit with the same force as if the sports car had hit a brick wall at 125 m.p.h. Two of his passengers, who didn't have their seat belts on, were thrown from the vehicle. One ended up in a ditch. The other in the roadway the driver had left. A semi ran over the body of his friend.*

*As for the driver, he survived, but he was scrunched in his seat as the front of the semi pushed the sports car's engine into the passenger compartment.*

That might be fine writing for a creative writing class, but it is terrible journalistic writing. Generally, when people read or listen to a news report they want the most important details right away:

*Two people were killed and a third critically injured when a red sports car apparently drifted into the wrong lane on U.S. 13 in Princess Anne, a town on Maryland's Eastern shore.*

*Police said the car, driven by ....*

You see how this gets right to the point? It doesn't set the scene, it just tells the result. People who were stuck in the resulting 2-hour traffic jam on U.S. 13 can find out what the cause was if they read or hear the news report.

Now, take a look at this press release distributed by EurekaAlert! a press release distribution service operated by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS):

News Release 23-Dec-2022

### **A seventeen-year landmark study finds that group meditation decreases US national stress**

World Journal of Social Science publishes study showing that group practice of the TM and TM-Sidhi techniques by √1% of a population decreased multiple stress indicators in the U.S.. Scientists call for a group to create world peace.

[Peer-Reviewed Publication](#)

Maharishi International University

## Indictors of Stress in the United Sates

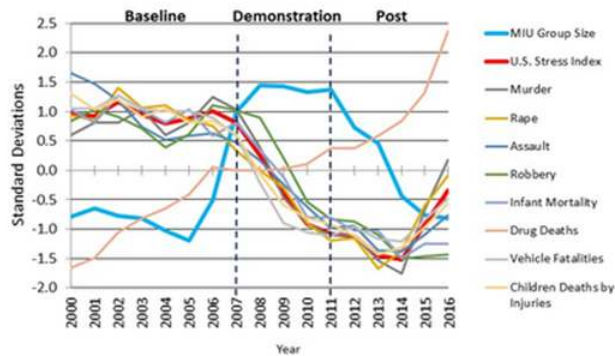


**image:** Size of the MIU TM and TM Sidhi group (blueline), eight indices of stress in the United States represented by the lines in different colors, and the US stress index, the mean of all eight variables indicated by the red line. [view more](#)

Credit: Maharishi International University

Every year during 2000 to 2006 there were tens of thousands of stress-related tragedies in the U.S. Official statistics from the FBI and Centers for Disease Control indicate that there were 15,440 murders, 93,438 rapes, and 86,348 child and adolescent deaths from accidents each year to give a few examples. The [current study](#) is the longest and most comprehensive of 50 studies to demonstrate what has been named the Maharishi Effect, in honor of Transcendental Meditation (TM) and Maharishi International University (MIU) founder Maharishi Mahesh Yogi.

The results can be seen in the chart below. The blue line indicates that during the Baseline period of 2000 to 2006 the size of the TM and TM-Sidhi group located at Maharishi International University in Fairfield, Iowa increased to reach the  $\sqrt{1\%}$  of the U.S. population (1725 people) and stayed there for five years during the Demonstration period from 2007 to 2011. All stress indicators immediately started decreasing. In the Post period when the size of the group size began to decline the rate of decrease in stress slowed and then it reversed and began to increase.

SOURCE: <https://www.eurekalert.org/news-releases/975329> (2022, December 26).

Do you understand what the release is trying to say? Neither do I. And neither would most editors or news producers in the U.S. Whatever message Maharishi University hoped to get out was lost in the first paragraph.

Compare that to this news release, also distributed the very same day by EurekAlert:

News Release 23-Dec-2022

### Soaring fertilizer prices could see millions more undernourished

[Peer-Reviewed Publication](#)

University of Edinburgh

High fertiliser prices could put an additional 100 million people at risk of undernourishment, a study suggests.

The war in Ukraine has led to the blockade of millions of tonnes of wheat, barley and corn, but reduced food exports from the region are less of a driver of food price rises than feared, researchers say.

Instead, a modelling study led by University of Edinburgh researchers suggests surging energy and fertiliser prices will have by far the greatest impact on food security in coming decades.

Until now, how energy and fertiliser price rises and export restrictions affects future global food prices was poorly understood. There has also been little analysis to quantify the scale of harm that hikes in the price of food could have on human nutritional health and the environment.

Do you see the difference? Do you see how the University of Edinburgh release gets your attention with a pretty startling statistic in the first paragraph and in the fourth paragraph explains why this study is significant. And how it is written in simple, plain English that nearly anyone can understand.

Now, take a look at the abstract of the actual study, which was published in the journal Nature Food:

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s43016-022-00659-9>

Do you see how the news release was written to make it understandable by members of the general public, while the abstract was written in a more “academic” style.

The point is this: You have to write for your audience. The writing style you are taught in English composition is fine for what it’s intended for. The writing style you are taught in Creative Writing is fine for creative writing. Academics learn a particular writing style, and so do lawyers. And the writing style taught by journalism and public relations instructors is best for conveying messages to the general public.

Journalistic writing is intended for mass consumption, and the fact is, even today, the “mass” isn’t all that well educated. Less than 40% of the American public has a college degree. That’s a considerable improvement over the 1930s, however, when only about 4% of the population had a college degree.

To write for people who have a relatively low level of education, one must write simply. Short sentences. Words that are easy to understand. It turns out, however, that the better educated population appreciates the same thing. They want to be able to absorb the news of the day quickly and easily. The Ph.D. in economics, for instance, doesn’t want to try to figure out what the Ph.D. in biology is saying.

U.S. newspapers traditionally have geared their writing toward an eighth grader, not toward a high school graduate, much less a college graduate. There’s a historical reason for this: Until the first GI Bill was passed after World War II, very few people went to college, and in fact, most Americans did not graduate from high school.

Even papers you might have thought would have well-educated audiences typically aimed for simplicity in writing. Bernard Kilgore, who transformed The Wall Street Journal from a 34,000-circulation trade paper to the nation’s first national newspaper with 775,000 subscribers and over 1 million readers during the 25 years before his death, constantly reminded his reporters and editors, “We have to make it easy for the reader, because the easiest thing for the reader to do is quit reading,” and that they were writing for “the little old lady in Des Moines in tennis shoes.”

That advice still applies: Make it easy for the reader and write for someone who isn’t an expert.

Is it local?

As this chapter was being written, an immense tragedy was unfolding in the area around Buffalo, N.Y. Pictures of downtown showed cars buried in snow. Police said 28 people thus far had died, some trapped in their cars for 48 hours or more. The Washington Post gave it about 10 inches on the front page; The New York Times, USA Today, the Los Angeles Times, The New York Daily News and the (Louisville) Courier-Journal gave it no front-page coverage.

Why? Because there wasn’t a local angle. As far as those newspapers knew, no one from their community had died in the storm, so the assumption was that no one in their circulation area was particularly interested.

It’s the same reason The Washington Post doesn’t report cattle prices. The number of people in the Washington, D.C., area who raise cattle is very small. And that’s the reason the Baltimore Sun devotes space to covering the Maryland State Fair, even though the Ohio, Indiana, and Iowa state fairs are much larger. Newspapers and radio-tv outlets are mass media, and if a story isn’t of interest to a mass of readers or viewers, it won’t get covered.

This changes a bit when you start talking about trade publications – those which are written and edited for people in a specific line of work. Usually their coverage area is national, but “local” means the people in that trade

How does this affect public relations practitioners? It affects where you attempt to place a story. If an event is happening in Largo, Md., the media that serve Largo – everything from a small local paper to the Washington Post and the Washington Examiner to the major D.C. broadcasting outlets are potential outlets for your news.

We'll discuss story placement in a later chapter.

Next: The inverted pyramid, the five W's and AP style.

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## CHAPTER OVERVIEW

### 2: The Basics

2.1: The Basics- Lead Paragraphs, Inverted Pyramids, Five W's

2.2: AP Style

2.3: Basic Editing Rules

2.4: Practical Exercise – Being Concise

2.5: Practical Exercises

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## 2.1: The Basics- Lead Paragraphs, Inverted Pyramids, Five W's

In this one chapter, we're going to teach you the essential fundamentals of newswriting. These rules apply in any medium – newspapers, radio/TV, online news, and news blogs. They don't necessarily apply in magazine writing or in non-news blogging, which have different objectives. Nor do they apply in fiction, legal writing, scholarly writing (especially in scholarly writing), or in books.

But one principle does apply across all types of writing: Make it easy for the reader. Why? Because the easiest thing for the reader to do is stop reading. A study a few years ago found that the most cited articles in scholarly journals were also the articles that were easiest to read. So, while the structure of journalistic writing does not apply to scholarly writing, the principle of writing clearly for your audience, in an organized and coherent manner, applies regardless of the medium.

### The Inverted Pyramid

The “inverted pyramid” is the most-used form of media writing in news stories and in press releases. The principal concept is that the most important factors are placed at the top of the story. You get right to the point:

- Two people were killed yesterday when ....
- The President proposed a record spending plan . . .
- The Prince George's Community College men's basketball team won the NJCAA national championship defeating ....

The remaining information is placed in descending order of importance in the following paragraphs.

### What's Essential?

Essential information is usually defined as the “Five Ws” of journalism: Who, What, When, Where and Why. A successful **lead paragraph** communicates the essential facts of who did what, where, when, where and why.

In reporting an accident, for instance, a reporter might write for the first paragraph:

Two people were killed yesterday on a rain-slickened Maryland 202 in Largo when their red sports car crossed the median and struck an on-coming semi.

That conveys the essential information of the story. Now you begin to fill in the details:

Police said the red 2019 Ford Mustang, driven by John Jones, 19, was traveling 22 miles over the speed limit when Jones apparently lost control of the vehicle. Both Jones and his passenger, Beth Hapless, were thrown from the vehicle and were transported to Prince George's County Medical Center where they were pronounced dead as a result of their injuries.

Here you can now fill in more details, but each paragraph is increasing less significant.

Another example:

The Biden Administration today proposed wiping out all student loan debt. President Biden said the huge amount of debt was holding back students from “getting on with their lives,” while Republicans called it “another Democratic giveaway to the rich.”

Some 85% of all student loan debt is held by people who attended graduate schools, primarily business, law and medicine. “President Biden wants hard-working men and women – most of whom don't have any college degree – to pay for the education of people who will be making six-figure incomes the day they graduate,” said House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy.

White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said McCarthy's statement was typical “of the heartlessness we've learned to expect from Republicans.”

The inverted pyramid dates from the 1850s, when news was transmitted over telegraph wires. With the most important information transmitted first, if the connection was lost, the story's essential facts could still be printed.

For editors, the inverted pyramid structure had an additional benefit: If an editor needed to cut an article to make it fit a certain amount of space, he could simply cut from the bottom, confident that the most important information would remain.

The first paragraph of a news story is called the **lead paragraph** (also spelled **lede** to distinguish it from the metal). Lead paragraphs should be short, not exceeding 30 words.

Inverted pyramids often are not used in feature stories, and some argue that in this day of online journalism they are no longer essential. Nonetheless, it remains true that if you want to get your news into a newspaper or on the air, you should use the inverted pyramid style because editors don't read all the way through press releases to decide whether to use them. If the first paragraph (or, if you're lucky, the first two paragraphs) don't "hook" them, your news will never see the light of day.

### **Body of the Article**

Having given the reader the most important information in the lead, now you can elaborate on what else you know about the story. You present this information in decreasing order of importance, not necessarily in chronological order. Use direct and indirect quotes, and be sure to cite your sources.

When it comes to citations, remember you are not writing an academic paper. Thus, "police said" or "William Jones, vice-president, customer relations, said" is fine. Every paragraph – ideally, every paragraph – should contain a fact, and every fact should be cited. If it's not cited, the source should be perfectly clear.

When initially referring to a human source, use the full name and title on first reference. On subsequent references, use the last name. If you believe it is necessary to remind the reader who the source is affiliated with, you might write, "PGCC's Williams."

In news stories, use the third person. Don't use pronouns such as I, me, you or us. Those are more suited to opinion pages.

Paragraphs should be no more than two or three sentences, and sentences should be short and simple. News stories are not the place to dazzle your reader with your brilliance. You can do that in a freelance piece you sell to *The Atlantic* or *National Review* if you wish.

### **Examples**

Study the following news stories to see how these principles are applied:

[Donald P. Baker, who chronicled Va. politics for The Post, dies at 90](#) (Washington Post obituary)

[Police ID man who died after falling through ice in Prince William County](#) (WTOP)

[High Rates of Chronic Absenteeism Persist at U.S. Schools](#) (Wall Street Journal)

[As Covid-19 Continues to Spread, So Does Misinformation About It](#) (New York Times)

[Christine Fuentes Joins Exovera as VP for Marketing, Communications](#) (WashingtonExec.com)

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## 2.2: AP Style

The Associated Press Stylebook is the gold standard of American English usage for American newspapers, news magazines, online news sites, and public relations practitioners. Although some publications, such as The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal, have developed their own style guidelines, AP style is fundamental even for those publications.

The content of newspapers and other mass media is typically the result of many different writers and editors working together. AP Style provides consistent guidelines for such publications in terms of grammar, spelling, punctuation and language usage. AP Style also seeks to avoid stereotypes and unintentionally offensive language.

In this course, you will be expected to follow AP Style in your written assignments.

Here's a summary of some of the more important AP style guidelines:

### Abbreviations and Acronyms

Some widely known abbreviations are required in certain situations, while others are acceptable but not required in some contexts. For example, *Dr.*, *Gov.*, *Lt. Gov.*, *Rep.*, *the Rev.* and *Sen.* are required before a person's full name when they occur outside a direct quotation. Please note, medical and political titles only need to be used on first reference when they appear outside of a direct quote. For courtesy titles, use these on second reference or when specifically requested. Other acronyms and abbreviations are acceptable but not required (i.e. FBI, CIA, GOP). The context should govern such decisions.

As a general rule, though, you should avoid what the Associated Press Stylebook calls "alphabet soup." Consult the Associated Press Stylebook for specific cases.

As a general rule, use only commonly recognized abbreviations. The most common, such as NASA, FBI and CIA, can be used on all references. Less well-known but still common ones such as OSHA and NATO can be used after you spell out the full name on first mention. The first time you use the name of an agency, put its abbreviation in parentheses immediately after: Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). In most cases, however, the stylebook suggests using a generic reference such as the agency or the alliance for all references after the first.

Don't put unfamiliar abbreviations in parentheses after the first reference (for example, "The American Copy Editors Society (ACES) ...") Instead either repeat the full name on subsequent references or use a generic reference, such as the society.

Abbreviate junior or senior directly after a name, with no comma to set it off:

Justin Wilson Jr.

Spell out the names of all states when used alone and in body text.

Be sure not to use the U.S. Postal Service abbreviations for states unless you are providing a full address including ZIP code: "Send contributions to Relief Fund, Box 185, Pasadena, CA 91030."

Spell out the name of a month when it is used without a specific date:

"August is too hot for a visit to Florida." Abbreviate months with six or more letters if they are used with a specific date: Sept. 28. Always spell out those with five or fewer letters: May 15.

Spell out titles used alone: "She was the first female senator from her state."

Abbreviate and capitalize most titles when they are used directly before a name: "Sen. Boxer posed hard questions for Rice."

Spell out all generic parts of street names (avenue, north, road) when no specific address is given: "The festival will be held on South Charles Street."

When a number is used, abbreviate avenue (Ave.), boulevard (Blvd.), street (St.) and directional parts of street names: "The suspect was identified as Michael Shawn of 1512 N. Mission St."

In writing news stories, never abbreviate:

- The days of the week

- Percent as %
- Cents as ¢
- And as & unless it is an official part of a name
- Christmas as Xmas

### Ages

For ages, always use figures. If the age is used as an adjective or as a substitute for a noun, then it should be hyphenated. Don't use apostrophes when describing an age range. Examples: *A 21-year-old student. The student is 21 years old. The girl, 8, has a brother, 11. The contest is for 18-year-olds. He is in his 20s.*

### Books, Periodicals, Reference Works, and Other Types of Compositions

Use quotation marks around the titles of books, songs, television shows, computer games, poems, lectures, speeches and works of art. Examples: *Author Porter Shreve read from his new book, "When the White House Was Ours." They sang "The Star-Spangled Banner" before the game.*

Do not use quotations around the names of magazine, newspapers, the Bible or books that are catalogues of reference materials. Examples: *The Washington Post first reported the story. He reads the Bible every morning.*

Do not underline or italicize any of the above.

### Dates, Months, Years, Days of the Week

For dates and years, use figures. Do not use *st*, *nd*, *rd*, or *th* with dates, and use Arabic figures. Always capitalize months. Spell out the month unless it is used with a date. When used with a date, abbreviate only the following months: *Jan.*, *Feb.*, *Aug.*, *Sept.*, *Oct.*, *Nov.* and *Dec.*

Commas are not necessary if only a year and month are given, but commas should be used to set off a year if the date, month and year are given. Use the letter *s* but not an apostrophe after the figures when expressing decades or centuries. Do, however, use an apostrophe before figures expressing a decade if numerals are left out. Examples: *Classes begin Aug. 25. Prince George's Community College first opened its doors in 1958. The semester begins in January. The 1800s. The '90s.*

If you refer to an event that occurred the day prior to when the article will appear, do not use the word *yesterday*. Instead, use the day of the week. Capitalize days of the week, but do not abbreviate. If an event occurs more than seven days before or after the current date, use the month and a figure.

### Datelines

Newspapers use datelines when the information for a story is obtained outside the paper's hometown or general area of service. Datelines appear at the beginning of stories and include the name of the city in all capital letters, usually followed the state or territory in which the city is located. The Associated Press Stylebook lists 30 U.S. cities that do not need to be followed by the name of a state. See **states and cities** below. Examples:

- DENVER – The Democratic National Convention began...
- ST. PAUL, Minn. – The Republican National Convention began...
- YOUNGSTOWN, Ohio – President Bush spoke to a group...
- **Dimensions**

### Miles

Use figures for any distances over 10. For any distances below 10, spell out the distance. Examples: *My flight covered 1,113 miles. The airport runway is three miles long.*

### Names

Always use a person's first and last name the first time they are mentioned in a story. Only use last names on second reference. Do not use courtesy titles such as *Mr.*, *Mrs.*, *Miss* or *Ms.* unless they are part of a direct quotation or are needed to differentiate between people who have the same last name.

### Numerals

Never begin a sentence with a figure, except for sentences that begin with a year. Examples: *Two hundred freshmen attended. Five actors took the stage. 1776 was an important year.*

Use roman numerals to describe wars and to show sequences for people. Examples: *World War II, Pope John Paul II, Elizabeth II.*

For ordinal numbers, spell out *first* through *ninth* and use figures for *10th* and above when describing order in time or location. Examples: *second base, 10th in a row.* Some ordinal numbers, such as those indicating political or geographic order, should use figures in all cases. Examples: *3rd District Court, 9th ward.*

For cardinal numbers, consult individual entries in the Associated Press Stylebook. If no usage is specified, spell out numbers below 10 and use figures for numbers 10 and above. Example: *The man had five children and 11 grandchildren.*

When referring to money, use numerals. For cents or amounts of \$1 million or more, spell the words cents, million, billion, trillion etc. Examples: *\$26.52, \$100,200, \$8 million, 6 cents.*

### **Punctuation**

Use a single space after a period.

Do not use commas before a conjunction in a simple series. Example: *In art class, they learned that red, yellow and blue are primary colors. His brothers are Tom, Joe, Frank and Pete.* However, a comma should be used before the terminal conjunction in a complex series, if part of that series also contains a conjunction. Example: *Purdue University's English Department offers doctoral majors in Literature, Second Language Studies, English Language and Linguistics, and Rhetoric and Composition.*

Commas and periods go within quotation marks. Example: *"I did nothing wrong," he said. She said, "Let's go to the Indiana game."*

### **States and Cities**

When the name of a state name appears in the body of a text, spell it out. State abbreviations should also be avoided in headlines where possible. States should be abbreviated when used as part of a short-form political affiliation. Examples: *He was travelling to Nashville, Tenn. The peace accord was signed in Dayton, Ohio. The storm began in Indiana and moved west toward Peoria, Ill.* Updated guidance to AP style notes that state names can also be abbreviated for the following purposes:

- Naming states in dateline text
- Naming states in photo captions
- Naming states in lists or tables
- Naming states in in editor's notes and credit lines

- Here is how each state is abbreviated in AP style (with the postal code abbreviations in parentheses):

| State Abbreviations |            |
|---------------------|------------|
| Ala. (AL)           | Neb. (NE)  |
| Ariz. (AZ)          | Nev. (NV)  |
| Ark. (AR)           | N.H. (NH)  |
| Calif. (CA)         | N.J. (NJ)  |
| Colo. (CO)          | N.M. (NM)  |
| Conn. (CT)          | N.Y. (NY)  |
| Del. (DE)           | N.C. (NC)  |
| Fla. (FL)           | N.D. (ND)  |
| Ga. (GA)            | Okla. (OK) |
| Ill. (IL)           | Ore. (OR)  |
| Ind. (IN)           | Pa. (PA)   |
| Kan. (KS)           | R.I. (RI)  |
| Ky. (KY)            | S.C. (SC)  |
| La. (LA)            | S.D. (SD)  |
| Md. (MD)            | Tenn. (TN) |
| Mass. (MA)          | Vt. (VT)   |
| Mich. (MI)          | Va. (VA)   |
| Minn. (MN)          | Wash. (WA) |
| Miss. (MS)          | W.Va. (WV) |
| Mo. (MO)            | Wis. (WI)  |
| Mont. (MT)          | Wyo. (WY)  |

You will notice that eight states are missing from this list. That is because Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Ohio, Texas and Utah are never abbreviated.

AP style does not require the name of a state to accompany the names of the following 30 cities:

| Cities Not Requiring State Names |                |
|----------------------------------|----------------|
| Atlanta                          | Phoenix        |
| Baltimore                        | Pittsburgh     |
| Boston                           | St. Louis      |
| Chicago                          | Salt Lake City |
| Cincinnati                       | San Antonio    |
| Cleveland                        | San Diego      |
| Dallas                           | San Francisco  |
| Denver                           | Seattle        |
| Detroit                          | Washington     |
| Honolulu                         |                |
| Houston                          |                |
| Indianapolis                     |                |
| Las Vegas                        |                |
| Los Angeles                      |                |
| Miami                            |                |
| Milwaukee                        |                |
| Minneapolis                      |                |
| New Orleans                      |                |
| New York                         |                |
| Oklahoma City                    |                |
| Philadelphia                     |                |

### Times

The exact time when an event has occurred or will occur is unnecessary for most stories. Of course, there are occasions when the time of day is important. In such cases, use figures, but spell out *noon* and *midnight*. Use a colon to separate hours from minutes, but do not use :00. Examples: 1 p.m., 3:30 a.m.

### Titles

Generally, capitalize formal titles when they appear before a person's name, but lowercase titles if they are informal, appear without a person's name, follow a person's name or are set off before a name by commas. Also, lowercase adjectives that designate the status of a title. If a title is long, place it after the person's name, or set it off with commas before the person's name. Examples: *President Biden*; *President-elect Trump*; *Sen. Harry Reid*; *Ben Cardin, a senator from Maryland*; *the senior senator from Maryland, Chris Von Hollen*; *former President George H.W. Bush*; *Paul Schneider, deputy secretary of homeland security*.

### Technological Terms

Here are the correct spelling and capitalization rules for some common technological terms:

- *BlackBerry, BlackBerrys*
- *download*
- *eBay Inc.* (use *EBay Inc.* when the word begins a sentence)
- *e-book*
- *e-book reader*
- *e-reader*
- *email*
- *cellphone*
- *Facebook*
- *Google, Googling, Googled*
- *hashtag*
- *IM* (*IMed, IMing*; for first reference, use *instant messenger*)
- *internet*
- *iPad, iPhone, iPod* (use *IPad, iPhone, or iPod* when the word begins a sentence)
- *LinkedIn*
- *social media*
- *smartphone*
- *Twitter, tweet, tweeted, retweet*
- *World Wide Web, website* (see the [AP's tweet](#) about the change), *Web page*
- *webmaster*
- *YouTube*

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## 2.3: Basic Editing Rules

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The name of the game is to be read. Whether you're writing for print media or for online media, here are some basic rules to follow:

- Write only what you know. This rule is violated by people who should know better. When a Russian-made missile was found exploded in Ukraine, many major media wrote that Russia had fired a missile into Ukraine that landed near the border, The Wall Street Journal wrote that a Russian-made missile was found near the Ukrainian border. The Journal, it turned out, was correct. The rocket had been made in Russia, but it had not been fired by Russia.
- Check your facts.
- Write strong headlines.
- Use a stylebook for consistency.
- Learn about and use keywords to help readers find your post.
- Use short paragraphs, short sentences and short words. Short paragraphs provide some white space, which makes it easier for the reader.
- Only one idea per paragraph.
- Separate paragraphs with a space
- Remember, many people will scan your post rather than read it. So make it easy for scanners. Use subheads to give scanners an understanding of the text.
- Where you can, use lists or bullet points
- Avoid distracting backgrounds and hard-to-read font colors and types. You will hardly go wrong if you stick with Times New Roman, Century Schoolbook, or Georgia as your typeface..
- 

Important concepts in the Age of Google:

- Search Engine Optimization
- Key Words

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## 2.4: Practical Exercise – Being Concise

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Fill in the blank with a simple word that can replace the word shown:

Obliterate \_\_\_\_\_

Objective \_\_\_\_\_

Utilize \_\_\_\_\_

Approximately \_\_\_\_\_

Negligent \_\_\_\_\_

Imbibe \_\_\_\_\_

Duplicate \_\_\_\_\_

Gargantuan \_\_\_\_\_

Remainder \_\_\_\_\_

Eccentric \_\_\_\_\_

Abandon \_\_\_\_\_

Deceased \_\_\_\_\_

Cognizant \_\_\_\_\_

Lacerations \_\_\_\_\_

Presently \_\_\_\_\_

Stated \_\_\_\_\_

Manufacture \_\_\_\_\_

Loathe \_\_\_\_\_

Component \_\_\_\_\_

Obtain \_\_\_\_\_

Relocate \_\_\_\_\_

## Practical Exercise – Write a Story

Actually, write three stories.

The first is a story announcing you are taking this class. Often when a p.r. person takes a new job, the first thing they do is put out a press release announcing they have just joined XYZ in a specific capacity. So, write a story announcing you are in this class. Be sure to tell your reader about any background you may have that makes you especially qualified for this class.

The second story is an obituary. Pick a historical person and write a 750-word obituary. You may base the obituary on a Wikipedia page, a book or something else. Be sure to tell me what your source is. The subject of your obit could be George Washington, George Washington Carver, Benjamin Franklin, Madam C.J. Walker, Eli Lilly, Harriet Tubman, or someone else.

The third story is on the importance of writing for a career in public relations. For this story, go on the internet and find at least three posts by public relations agencies on why writing is crucial for a successful public relations career. From those three posts, write a story on the importance of writing to success in public relations. You can quote the agency this way: “LargoPR said.” Or “according to LargoPR.” Outside your story, give me links to your sources,

Grading criteria for all three stories will include accuracy, use of the inverted pyramid style, and conformity to AP Style.

All exercises should be submitted in Times New Roman 12 point type, double spaced. Be sure to put a slug line in the upper left hand corner of your paper with your name, topic and date.

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## 2.5: Practical Exercises

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Here are three common situations in which a reporter or a public relations person may need to write a story. The reporter, of course, writes a news story; the public relations practitioner will write a press release.

For each of the three examples that follow, write a news story.

### 1. Early Estimate of Motor Vehicle Crash Statistics for the First Half

This morning that National Highway Traffic Safety Administration released its early estimate of motor vehicle crash statistics. You are the transportation reporter for “The Baltimore Sun.” Write an 800-word story based on this release.

### 2. Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act

You’re a new reporter for the Fayetteville (N.C.) Observer, North Carolina’s oldest newspaper which traces its roots to 1816. For years there have been reports that military members have suffered serious illnesses as a result of being exposed to toxic fumes from “burn pits” at military bases and especially in overseas combat zones. One of the largest U.S. military bases, Fort Bragg, is right outside Fayetteville.

You’re assigned to cover a speech by Denis R. McDonough, secretary of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, at a Nov. 7 Press Club luncheon on the impact of the Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act, signed by President Biden in August, that expands medical benefits to veterans exposed to toxins from burn pits on military bases. McDonough also delivered an update on the state of America’s veterans and their families.

Write an 800-word story about the speech.

### 3. Police briefing

You’re the police reporter for the Moscow-Pullman (Idaho) Daily News, a daily newspaper serving the Moscow, Idaho, and Pullman, Washington, metropolitan area. The two cities on the Palouse are the homes of the two states’ land grant universities, the University of Idaho and Washington State University. Six weeks ago, four college students were murdered in their off-campus housing, and the Moscow Police Department put out a notice that they would be holding a press conference on a “major development” in the case. As the police reporter, you attend the conference and following the conference you will write a 750-word story based on what happens at the conference.

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## CHAPTER OVERVIEW

### 3: Feature Writing

[3.1: Feature Writing](#)

[3.2: Practical Exercises](#)

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### 3.1: Feature Writing

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The inverted pyramid works well for hard news reporting – the type of story where you can say “yesterday” or “this morning” or “breaking news.” Police reporting, obituaries, sports reporting, legislative actions, court reporting, all are well served by the inverted pyramid.

But there’s a whole category of stories that aren’t well served by the inverted pyramid – those about people, about how or why something happened, or how to do something. And yet, in 1941, journalistic convention dictated that every story would include a time element – “today” or “yesterday” – and basically follow the inverted pyramid.

But Barney Kilgore was sick of today. He was tired of yesterday. And finally, in 1941, he could do something about it. The newly named managing editor of The Wall Street Journal decreed that “It doesn’t have to have happened today to be news. If a date is essential, use the exact date.” But from now on, “today” and “yesterday” would no longer appear in the leads of WSJ stories.

In so doing, the Journal transformed feature writing. Now, magazines and newspapers around the world publish stories that emphasize explanation over information and understanding over knowledge. Online news sites also rely on this form.

The format is fairly simple: Open with a descriptive paragraph or two or three. Then a “nut graf” that contains the essential theme of the story. It tells the reader what the writer is up to. It has several purposes:

- It justifies the story by telling readers why they should care.
- It provides a transition from the lead and explains the lead and its connection to the rest of the story.
- It often tells readers why the story is timely.
- It often includes supporting material that helps readers see why the story is important.

In some respects, it’s similar to the lead in an inverted pyramid story. If the reader reads no further, at least he knows what the story’s about. The nut graf should be no lower than the fifth paragraph in the story.

Take a look at [this WSJ story](#) dealing with an attempt to unionize an Amazon warehouse. Note how it begins with a short vignette. Can you identify the nut graf? Do you see how this story can be important both to workers seeking to unionize and to employers seeking to avoid unionization?

Not all features are serious, of course. Take a look at this one about [take-out orders vanishing](#). Notice the same approach: a short vignette at the start, a nut graf (can you find it?) followed by more details to round out the story.

How do you identify topics for features? Features can be a profile or personality story that gives insight into a person’s role, experience or background. Or they can seek to humanize a set of statistics.

Take a look at [this Washington Post story](#) about fentanyl. Do you think a traditional inverted pyramid story would have been as effective? Can you find the nut graf?

How do you decide what can be a good feature story? The short answer is, almost anything can be a feature. But stories focused on people, as versus events, are particularly good candidates. For example, the 95-year-old who is receiving her fourth Associate’s degree from Prince George’s Community College, or “a day in the life of ....,” or a high school athlete who was recruited for a top college athletics team. Investigative stories, such as the Washington Post story about fentanyl, are almost always best treated as features. So can sports. Check out this story about [the Duke’s Mayo Bowl](#). And this profile of [Jeshaun Jones](#).

For people planning to go into a public relations career, perhaps after a few years in the news media, being able to identify feature opportunities and to write good feature stories will go far toward building success because a “feature” story approach will enable you to produce an “evergreen” story promoting your organization’s services or products.

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## 3.2: Practical Exercises

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- A. Going online, identify five feature stories from news websites. Provide the links, explain why they are good features, and identify the nut grafs.
  - B. List three features that you might like to write.
  - C. From the list, write one.
- 

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## CHAPTER OVERVIEW

### 4: Public Affairs Writing

[4.1: Introduction to Public Affairs Writing](#)

[4.2: The Difference Between a News Story and a Press Release](#)

[4.3: Practical Exercises](#)

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## 4.1: Introduction to Public Affairs Writing

There's a reason why we began this course with a solid discussion and practice of basic newswriting techniques: They are the fundamental skills in public relations writing. Public relations is also known as public affairs and strategic communications, depending upon the client.

When a p.r. practitioner puts out a press release, it is typically done in the inverted pyramid style. Check out these news releases:

[PGCC SGA and CAB Donate Arts and Crafts to Children's Hospital](#)

[Major League Soccer announces 2023 season schedule](#)

[Defense Department Increases Child Care Fees to Maintain Quality Child Care for Military Families](#)

[Apple Reports Fourth Quarter Results](#)

[About 1 in 100 Heart Disease Deaths Linked to Extreme Hot and Cold Weather Days](#)

Getting a story in the newspaper or on television is called “earned media,” meaning that the story got into the paper on or the air on its own merits and the space to publish the story was not paid for or owned by the client.

Getting your story into earned media – your local newspaper or on your local television station, for instance – is considered far better than buying space or airtime because it puts the “endorsement” of the publication or station behind your message.

Why? What's the difference between public relations and journalism? Let's start by seeing how they are similar:

--They communicate with the public

--They build trust with their audiences. Journalists build credibility and trust with the public by reporting and publishing fair and accurate content. PR professionals seek to build trust to inform and persuade target audiences to support and organization or a product.

-- They both provide information in an easily understandable way.

-- They tell stories.

But there are significant differences:

--News organizations serve one master, the public. By extension, the employees of that organization, the reporters and editors, also serve one master, the public.

--PR professionals are paid to work for a client or their employer. By extension, they serve the interests of the organization, not the public.

--PR professionals target specific audiences to build support for a product, a brand or an idea. Journalists have an acquired audience, and what they are publishing (the news) is of interest to the public broadly).

-- Journalists have the freedom to tell the stories they want. PR professionals, on the other hand, must tell stories that advance the interests of their clients.

-- Journalists have an ethical obligation to be objective, while PR is subjective because it is persuading the audience to support a client's brand or product.

PR professionals seek to get their message in earned media, because it is believed that doing so puts the imprimatur of the media behind the message. But PR professionals also may seek to get their message out by buying space or airtime to insert an “advertorial” into the media. It may in fact have information and perhaps legitimate news value, but it was not produced by the independent journalists of the publication.

It looks like a magazine or newspaper article.

It reads like a magazine or newspaper article.

But it's not a magazine or newspaper article.

Sometimes called “native advertising,” they are meant to be just a bit sneaky. While they are primarily found in print publications, you can also find them on websites. Here are some sample advertorials:

<https://myfavoritemarketer.com/sample-advertorials/>

Or they might produce features that appear both on their website and in a quarterly magazine mailed to people in their marketing region. Take a look at this example from Adventist Health Care:

#### [Cardiac Rehabilitation Helped Shire McNamara Focus on Recovery](#)

Notice how it tells a story, based on a real person. While the business objective is to increase utilization of Adventist HealthCare’s hospital and cardiac rehabilitation program, it provides practical, usable information about the symptoms of a heart attack, information about the benefits of cardiac rehab and about results. Nowhere in the article is an explicit call to action.

This is the sort of story that would never be published in a local newspaper – it doesn’t have a “today” angle, for one thing, nor is it illustrative of a trend – but it is vital information for people who may have a heart attack or may be present when someone has a heart attack.

It’s the sort of thing PR professionals can do with owned media.

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## 4.2: The Difference Between a News Story and a Press Release

The same basic techniques, especially use of the inverted pyramid, are used to write many press releases. But a press release is not a news story. It has a different objective.

The news story seeks to provide the public with objective information that reports all sides of an event or a development. The press release, on the other hand, seeks to promote the client's interests. That's not to say the writer of a press release lies. But if he is promoting a new brand of Coca-Cola, he has no obligation to call up the media relations person at Pepsi and ask for Pepsi's comment about the product. That's the job of a news reporter.

Notice the first words of [this press release](#) are the name of the agency. And notice the first words of this press release by Sen. Ben Cardin are not the major action – President Biden's signature of legislation removing the bust of the author of the Dred Scott decision from public display in the U.S. Capitol – but rather the names of two U.S. senators. Same thing on [this press release](#) by a major trade association. The first words in the release are the name of the association, not what's new in the updated code, but rather the name of the trade association. And notice [this release](#), which features the name of the automaker, not the artist's vision. (The lead paragraph is entirely too long, by the way).

There is absolutely nothing wrong with a press release beginning with the name of the client. Who does something is important. But often equally important – or more important – is the action being taken or responded to. Putting the name of the individual or group at the start of the release serves a couple of important objectives:

First, it tells the reader or the editor how seriously they should take this particular release. Suppose my release praising President Biden for signing the legislation removing Dred Scott's bust arrived at the same time Sen. Cardin's release on the same topic arrived. Whose release do you think is more likely to get in the paper or trigger an assignment editor sending a crew out to film a package about the action, a package which, of course, would include the names of the Senators?

Second, and equally or perhaps more important from the standpoint of a public relations client, the release helps increase name recognition of the client. Here's a New York City Council candidate explaining why name recognition is important to a local politician:

[Ken Biberaj on How to Build Name Recognition Running for Office](#)

And here's an interesting take on how Apple and Nike have branded your brain:

[How Apple and Nike have branded your brain | Your Brain on Money | Big Think](#)

To a significant extent, brand recognition is extremely important in business and in politics. That's why most press releases start with the name of the client.

How do you decide whether to use earned media, paid media or owned media for any one part of a p.r. campaign?

Using earned media is a gamble. On the particular day your release arrives, will it be a "quiet" news day? If you expect it to be quiet, your release stands a better chance of getting in the paper or on the air. You also run the risk that a reporter will use your release as the foundation for a story that veers off in another direction, and your client may not get any exposure at all. But earned media does give you the imprimatur of the print, broadcast or online media.

Your release may not be likely to be printed because it doesn't meet the criteria of news, but you are certain it would be of interest to that publication's readers or station's viewers. Take a look at this [e-mail newsletter](#) from The Wall Street Journal. You'll notice that it's sponsored by Indeed. Notice also in the middle of it is "Content from our sponsor."

Click on "Learn More" and you'll find an interesting article telling employers who need workers that "hiring job seekers with a criminal record can be the right move." Would employers who read the Journal find this interesting? You bet. Does it read like a news story or feature, perhaps even one you would find in the Journal? Yes. Would the Journal print a story by its own reporter that was this long? Not likely. If it did, would a WSJ-reported story only mention Indeed? Absolutely not. Would the WSJ reporter seek to find at least one "justice-impacted" hire that went awry? Absolutely.

Notice also that this advertorial is straightforward about what it is. At the top of the article itself it says, "Paid Program – What's This." (Click on What's This and you learn this content was created by the WSJ advertising department and the WSJ news

organization was not involved in its creation.) The section of the newsletter where you link to the article is headed “Content from Our Sponsor: Indeed.”

Not all publications that run this type of material make sure readers know the difference between paid and earned content, and not all advertisers would agree to the Journal’s terms.

So, what does Indeed get out of paying for the Journal to include this article in its “Careers & Leadership” e-newsletter? It’s able to position itself as a leader in the fair chance hiring movement; no competitor’s name is mentioned, and it further implants its name as a hiring agency to look to if you’re an employer who needs talent. And it gets readers who it can be sure have an interest in the subject.

Running this sort of content in a newspaper or online would seem to be ideal. Sometimes. But maybe the company wants to target people who live within a certain distance of a facility, and maybe the local newspaper can provide that type of targeting. That’s one example of where owned media would be ideal.

Amtrak and many airlines produce magazines for their riders. The magazine tells the reader about interesting things of do or see in destination cities, give news of interest to consumers and may include a profile of a crew member. Likewise, many hospitals produce magazines that include accounts of successful procedures done at that hospital by one of its doctors. These are examples of owned media being used to reach a segment of the public.

Another place where owned media comes into play is reaching employees or stockholders or customers.

The key to success with owned media and with paid media is that the articles need to be written in a dispassionate tone, be interesting, and be informative.

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## 4.3: Practical Exercises

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You've seen the situation of these practical exercises in 3.3. But now there's a difference: you are no longer a reporter. Instead you are a public relations person.

For each of the exercises below:

1. Tell us why the agency is releasing this news.
2. Write the release.

Your work should conform to AP Style, should be double spaced, Times New Roman 12 pt.

Here are the situations again:

1. **Early Estimate of Motor Vehicle Crash Statistics for the First Half**
2. **Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act**
3. **Police briefing**

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## CHAPTER OVERVIEW

### 5: Setting Strategy

5.1: Setting Strategy

5.2: Developing a Public Relations Strategy

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## 5.1: Setting Strategy

When you began your college career, you chose a major. If you didn't select a major, you probably elected General Studies because that is a comprehensive degree that does not focus on any one area. Having chosen a major, you then laid out a list of courses that would get you the required number of credit hours to graduate. Given a choice between two science courses, you might have picked biology rather than physics because you thought physics was likely to require math, and you're not strong in math. That was a **strategy** to get you where you wanted to go.

Likewise, if your parents own their own home, they set that goal early in their marriage and then developed a strategy for getting there: How large a down payment would they need? How much work would they need to save for that down payment, etc. That, too, was a strategy.

A strategy is a plan or action designed to achieve a major or overall goal. When you chose your major, you probably chose it because you believed it would help you get a job in a field that you really wanted to work in. Someone who wants to be a ballerina would not major in chemistry but in dance, for example.

For the most part, newspaper reporters don't have to worry about strategy. There was an accident at 5<sup>th</sup> and Main. Writing the story doesn't require some overarching plan. Nor does a story that Congress passed a bill raising taxes.

There are cases, of course, where newspaper editors and reporters need to have a plan. I wrote my Master's thesis on "How the St. Petersburg Times Won the Pulitzer Prize." In that case, the owner of the paper set both the objective and how the Times would achieve that objective: Nelson Poynter wanted nothing less than major legislative changes – an Open Public Records Act, a top-to-bottom reform of the Florida Turnpike Authority, and several other objectives. It was going to be achieved by a daily story running in the middle of the front page. Day after day, one example after another of corruption in the Turnpike Authority – and, by extension, Florida government itself -- would be printed until finally the public was so angry the politicians had to act. Poynter got his objective.

It is no different for a public relations person. His client has a strategy and a vision. California wants 100% of all light vehicles to be all-electric by 2035, so auto makers such as Ford Motor Co. have to have a strategy to meet that goal. General Motors Co. says it will be 100% electric vehicles by 2035; Ford says it will produce both electric and internal combustion engine vehicles. Two different goals, two different strategies.

Everything the public relations person produces needs to support the strategy of his client, whether that client is his employer or the client of a public relations agency. One way to do this is to mention it in the "About Us" paragraph in a press release. General Motors p.r. people might say, "General Motors has a goal to produce all-electric vehicles by 2035." In a story about electric vehicles that might be in the lead paragraph: "To further its goal of producing only electric vehicles by 2035, General Motors Co. today announced ...."

Companies also have visions and missions. What that vision is will differ, of course, from company to company:

- Ford Motor Co. says its purpose is "to help build a better world, where every person is free to move and pursue their dreams."
- General Motors says its vision is to "stand together to drive the world forward. Everybody in. Our goal is to deliver world-class customer experiences at every touchpoint and do so on a foundation of trust and transparency."
- Apple's vision statement is "*To make the best products on earth and to leave the world better than we found it.*"
- Indiana University's Kelley School of Business says its "overarching vision is to be recognized as being among the most important business schools in the world."
- Prince George's Community College's vision is to be "the region's premier center for dynamic teaching and learning, strategic partnerships, and community engagement that advances knowledge, economic equity, and lifelong personal development."
- Bowie State University's vision is to be "widely recognized as one of the nation's best public comprehensive universities that is a model for academic excellence, innovation, and student success."

You'll notice that not only do these examples differ from each other, but they can have a real impact on how a public relations person puts out information. Neither Ford nor GM mention the fact that fundamentally they build and sell cars.

Bain & Co., a consultancy, explains the difference between a mission statement and a vision statement:

A Mission Statement defines the company's business, its objectives and its approach to reach those objectives. A Vision Statement describes the desired future position of the company. Elements of Mission and Vision Statements are often combined to provide a statement of the company's purposes, goals and values. However, sometimes the two terms are used interchangeably.

(Bain, 2022)

Surprisingly, when I searched online for the mission of Ford and General Motors, I didn't find a mission statement. The three educational institutions, however, did have mission statements. You can read them here, along with Apple's:

[Prince George's Community College](#)

[Bowie State College](#)

[Kelley School](#)

[Apple Inc,](#)

Apple's mission statement – *"To bringing the best user experience to customers through innovative hardware, software, and services"* – drives the company. Apple says its mission statement has three core components:

**Best User Experience.** Whether it is iPhone, iPad, or wearable, Apple designs all its products to be user-friendly. The company says it does not compromise when it comes to user experience. Apple's products come with innovative and user-friendly features, delivering the best experience for the end-user. In 2020, Apple introduced robust location and Bluetooth permissions in iOS 13. In 2021, it unveiled an **opt-in ad-tracking feature for iOS 14**. These user-friendly privacy features can help protect the personal data of iPhone users and improve their experiences.

**Innovative Products.** Apple designs products that address the unique needs of its customers. Since its founding, Apple has pushed the standard in product design, usability, and functionality. Apple's hardware and software solutions cater to various market segments, including education, business, and healthcare. In the past few years, Apple has increased its healthcare presence with innovative products like Apple Watch for detecting heart irregularities. Its Apple Health Records feature for iPhone allows patients to access their medical data via their mobile devices. In Q1 2020, Apple reported **\$91.8 billion in quarterly revenues** with record-high earnings from its healthcare products and services.

**Quality Service Delivery.** From its App Store, Apple Care, and tech support, Apple is obsessed with customer service. It oversees everything, from design to development, sales, and repairs. This hands-on approach gives Apple an edge over its competitors. A 2020 investigative research awarded Apple 51/60 for online support and **34/40 for phone support** with an overall tech support score of 85/100. This score is impressive given that most companies offer poor customer service.

(Apple, 2022)

You can see how the mission and vision statements might drive what a public relations person releases. Apple's vision and mission statement are pretty specific and a public relations news writer would know when writing about new products to emphasize how a product upgrade's innovation and user-friendly feature improves the user experience. That would be true whether he is writing about the company's earnings or the promotion of a design engineer who worked on a particular product.

**Brand:** Not only does everything produced in a PR shop need to further (or at least support) the vision of the company, it must support that company or product's specific brand.

People tend to misunderstand what a brand is. Except for cattle, a brand does not refer solely to a graphic image – Ford's blue oval, Apple's apple – but rather to the whole bundle of emotions generated when people hear or see the name of a company, product or person. Are you or your company honest? Reliable? Do your products perform as advertised? How do you treat your employees? What do your employees say about you?

Watch this video of Ann Bastianelli explain what a brand is, and provide a lesson in public relations management:

[Ann Bastianelli – Powerful personal brand management](#)

She's talking about personal brands, but the same concepts apply to all brands.

**Case Study:** Steve Jobs announcement of the launch of the iPhone was one of the most successful product launches in recent history. What was the pr strategy involved?

First, when a new product is being developed, Apple doesn't comment. There are no leaks that the new iPhone will feature this or that until the product is officially announced. The suspense keeps building even after Apple gives some social media users a sneak peek.

Second, hold a product launch event. Asking key stakeholders, such as suppliers, clients and high-profile people to attend boost your chances of getting coverage. Here's a video of then-chairman Steve Jobs announcing the new iPhone:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x7qPAY9JqE4>

If you paid close attention, you may have noted he repeatedly used the phrase "Today, Apple reinvents the phone." That phrase appeared in several place in the press kits distributed at the event. The result was many news stories in earned media included the phrase, "Apple reinvented the smartphone."

Here's a look at the inside of Apple's PR shop:

[Seeing through the illusion: Understanding Apple's Mastery of the Media](#)

It is a stunningly detailed account, well worth reading.

(Gurman 2014)

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## 5.2: Developing a Public Relations Strategy

For almost every release an organization puts out, there has to be a strategy. Is the company announcing a new product? The PR strategy may be to use the announcement to further the identification of the company as a leader in product innovation. If that's the case, every release about a new product will incorporate the phrase "a leader in product innovation." Did the company just win recognition from the Society for Human Resource Management or Working Woman as a "Best Place to Work." That certainly would be incorporated into every personnel announcement, and perhaps into every release.

Let's take the last example and bore down a bit. Let's say a college has an objective of being recognized as "The Best." What sort of releases would contribute to that recognition?

- A new building
- A major gift by a donor to a department
- A new program
- Hiring a particular professor
- Being recognized by U.S. News & World Report as one of the 100, or 50, or 25, or 10 best colleges overall or in a particular area

The answer, of course, is all the above.

The point being that when an organization's board of directors or president adopts a goal, that determines the objective for every department down the line:

- Academic Affairs develops a plan to recruit well-recognized professors. Those professors might hold Ph.D.'s, which is a research degree. Or they might be someone who has worked in the field and earned top honors. A journalism department might hire a Pulitzer Prize winner and make him a professor of practice, for instance.
- Deans and department chairs begin thinking about any changes they need to make to the physical plant.
- Admissions develops a plan to improve the quality of student admitted. Maybe a high school GPA of 2.0 has been good enough. The first move by Admissions might be to require a GPA of 2.5 or even 3.0 or higher. If a college can be known as a "selective admissions" college, that impacts the quality of students applying, the quality of professors seeking work there, major gifts foundations and wealthy individuals might make.
- Buildings and grounds might develop a new landscape plan to get the college on a list of "most beautiful college campuses in America."

All of this leads to the public relations team seeking to put out press releases that contribute to the perception that the college is one of "the best" or is on its way to becoming one of the best. For example, a creative writing professor writes a new novel. The public relations department might put out a press release about the new book, especially if it is published by a major New York publisher.

During the Covid pandemic, [Howard University](#) put out a release about how its research faculty was responding to the pandemic. Bowie State announced that Laika, a feature film animation studio, was partnering with BSU to build the nation's first stop-motion animation studio at a HBCU. University of Maryland announced its scientists have created a new chemical compound that could be a promising antidote for methamphetamine and fentanyl.

One of the ways a PR team develops a strategy is to engage in the "discovery process." They look at the current state of the organization and determine what's working and what's not in its p.r. efforts.

Sometimes a company needs to "rebrand" itself. Typically, sales are slow, it's hard for p.r. and marketing to connect with their audience, and the brand image needs a face lift.

When Lytho compiled a list of five examples of rebranding done right, the No. 1 example was Old Spice. Old Spice has been a recognized men's deodorant since 1938. By the early 2000s, the brand was known as the brand your grandfather looked like. It introduced a body wash but competing brands – notably Dove Men+Care – did too. In 2010, Unilever announced a huge campaign for Dove Men+Care to air on the Super Bowl. Old Spice realized it had to respond, and it had to target younger men. The rebranding was incredibly successful, and you can read it [here](#).

A major part of Old Spice's effort involved social media. For both tv commercials and social media, Old Spice created a persona that was strong and on point. Old Spice used Wieden+Kennedy, an advertising agency. It seeded social networks with invitations to

interact. On Twitter, for instance, Old Spice posted this tweet:

“Today could be just like the other 364 days you log into twitter, or maybe the Old Spice man shows up @OldSpice”

This can be used by almost any business. For instance, a wine shop could take questions on matching food with wine and let chefs from the best restaurants provide the answers and recipes. Run a dance studio? Post videos of dancers and invite viewers to select their favorite. An auto repair shop? Tips for maintaining your car.

Old Spice created the Old Spice Man. But you could engage an influencer or a famous person. The person doesn’t have to be a Broadway star or sports star. It could just as easily be the Mayor, or members of the local baseball team, or it could be a blogger. Some bloggers have astoundingly big followings. Personalize the response – every time you make the exchange personal with just one customer, others also want your character to give a “shout out” to them.

Create a series of stories. Remember, this whole process is about interactive storytelling. The more stories and the more consistently you deliver them, the greater the odds to become either a media habit or an outright addiction.

Keep the videos simple and short.

And tie your social media promotions into other advertising. Put up signage in your store. A merchant who advertises should promote your online contests or character. You’ll get a lot more views than just “visit our website.”

To learn how Ford developed a successful PR campaign as part of the launch of the Mustang Mach-E, click [here](#).

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## CHAPTER OVERVIEW

### 6: Sports Information Director

#### **6.1: Sports Information Director**

[6.1: Sports Information Director](#)

[6.2: Practical Exercises – Sports Information Director](#)

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## 6.1: Sports Information Director

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If you like sports, a sports information director job might be just what you're looking for. All colleges and universities that have intercollegiate athletics team have them and of course professional teams have public relations departments.

The sports information director performs a multitude of tasks, all oriented to getting the word out about the team. The sports information director, or a member of his staff, attends and summarizes athletic events, arranges interviews and provide information to the media.

He also is responsible for consistently recording accurate statistics from various events. At a baseball game, for instance, he would record each hitter's batting average and each pitcher's earned run average. In football, he would record information such as a quarterback's passing average and touchdown completions.

Another responsibility is arranging interviews between media and coaches, and sometimes players. He also may be responsible for arranging any special event – such as autograph signings, hall of fame inductions. These are important because in publicizing the athletic department's accomplishments, the SID helps make it better known.

Watch Howard University assistant sports information director Derk Bryan discuss his job and how he has gained experience at both the collegiate and professional levels in this video. You can also read more of his biography below the clip.

[Howard assistant Sports Information Director Derk Bryant](#)

When it comes to basketball, there is no college program in the country where the sport is taken more seriously than Indiana University (Fall 2022 enrollment, Bloomington: 48,952). Here's a day in the life of the IU Basketball SID:

[Day in the Life of an Indiana Basketball SID](#)

With 2,933 students in the fall of 2022, SUNY Canton is nothing like the powerhouse of Indiana or Arizona State. But SUNY Canton has a sports information director. Here's his story:

[SUNY Canton Sports Information Director Interview](#)

With 54,886 students on its main campus in Tempe, Arizona State is another powerhouse. Here's their SID:

[Doug Tammaro: America's top Sports Information Director](#)

**Reflect:** Based on these videos, would you want to be a Sports Information Director?

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## 6.2: Practical Exercises – Sports Information Director

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Choose and complete one of the three activities below:

### **#1 – Interview an SID**

Identify a Sports Information Director at a college or university, preferably one you would want to attend. Call or email him and ask if he could give your 5 or 10 minutes for an interview about his job.

**Important:** List each person you call on the Discussion Board so that we only have one person calling.

Your interview should be recorded in video format. It may be recorded on your cellphone or laptop. Once it is recorded and edited, it should be posted to YouTube or Vimeo. (If you don't have a YouTube or Vimeo channel, get one.) Do NOT post to Google Drive. Most of the time, we are unable to open your video. After posting, post the URL to the Discussion Board, and comment on two other students' videos.

### **#2 – Write an advance story about the next PGCC or other college athletic contest.**

No more than 700 words. If you wish, you may write the story instead about a future game at the school whose SID you interviewed.

### **#3 – Write a story about the game.**

You attended or watched the game. Now, write a story about the game. How did your team do? If you don't regularly read the sports pages, read a couple of stories to get a feel for how sports reporters write their stories.

Here's one example of a sports story:

[Maryland's woes deepen as the Terps take an 81-46 trouncing at Michigan](#)

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## CHAPTER OVERVIEW

### 7: Corporate Communications

**Corporate Communications**

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[7.2: Media Relations](#)

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[7.5: Investor Relations](#)

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## 7.1: Corporate Communications

On Dec. 19, 2022, as the Christmas holiday week began, officials in Buffalo appeared ready for another storm. Two, even three, feet of snow are not uncommon for Buffalo. But on the morning of Dec. 23, it took just minutes for winds to accelerate from 10 miles an hour to 70. Thirty-six out of 52 inches of snow recorded in the Buffalo region fell Friday into Saturday morning.

The storm created a disaster, and not just for local emergency management officials who days later reported at least 40 people were dead. The storm covered a vast swath of the United States. Southwest Airlines cancelled more than 2500 of its flights for several days, its passengers unable to get to their destinations, sleeping in airports and a vast amount of lost baggage.

While its competitors bounced back quickly from the severe winter weather, the low-cost carrier cancelled thousands of holiday flights while its competitors bounced back quickly. Five days after the massive winter storm wreaked havoc on holiday air travel across the U.S., Delta Air Lines, American Airlines and United Airlines each cancelled fewer than 40 flights. Southwest that day cancelled more than 2,500 flights, or 62% of its flight schedule. What happened? And what publics did it need to address and why?

To answer the second question first, there were four publics that Southwest needed to communicate with. Overall, it failed. The first public, of course, was its customers, the people who were stranded. The second was internal – the airline’s employees. The third was the general media, and the fourth was the regulators and Congress. We’ll use Southwest as a case study as we review corporate communications.

But first, let’s understand why Southwest, usually ranked as one of the best airlines in terms of customer service, had this experience. We’ll examine two elements: the impact of extreme weather on Southwest’s flying model and where corporate communications ranked on the organization chart.

First, Southwest’s “point-to-point” model failed. The point-to-point route model used by Southwest often lets passengers fly directly from smaller cities and regions without having to go through a central hub such as Dallas, Atlanta, Denver, or New York. Point-to-point is normally a source of competitive advantage for Southwest, but it appeared that the other airlines’ hub-and-spoke model worked better this time.

For an airline, the advantage of hub-and-spoke is there’s a pool of crew members and pilots who can report to work at a major airport. Planes are also kept closer to their home airports, rather than being spread across the country. It’s harder to have a reserve of crew members and planes when an airline serves many smaller markets, as does Southwest.

Its crew scheduling software was outdated and couldn’t keep track of where crews were after so many flights were cancelled. Finally, it didn’t have agreements with other airlines allowing passengers to fly on competitors planes when there is a cancellation or significant delay.

The airline’s communications with its passengers were a disaster. Here’s what it did:

- It posted this statement on its website, then didn’t update it:

*“Due to adverse weather events and their resulting effects, we are currently experiencing operational disruptions and are working diligently and safely to restore normal flight schedules as quickly as possible.”*

*Notice that the statement gave no direction to customers at all.*

- On Facebook, only one post (at 11:09 a.m. EST Monday, Dec. 26) with no updates:

*“We continue to experience high call and social inquiry volumes. Please check your flight status and explore self-service options”*

- Same on Twitter.

Now, it is highly likely that Southwest executives didn’t know when the situation would start to resolve. At the very least, they should have apologized and said they didn’t know. It would have been even better if they also explained that the point-to-point system, “which normally saves our customers time and money compared to other carriers that use the hub-and-spoke system” was overwhelmed but they were working as hard as possible to resolve the situation.

The irony is that Southwest actually posted [daily updates](#) the week of December 26. The updates were excellent in terms of tone and message. But customers couldn’t find them. The updates were posted on its news release page. They should have been posted on the home page.

What happened to Southwest was a dramatic illustration of why every business of any size should have a corporate communications executive reporting to the CEO, just as it has a general counsel, a finance department, a marketing department, a production department whose leaders all report to the CEO. When things go really wrong – and at some point, things always go wrong – operating executives don’t need to be trying to think how to deal with customers.

The heads of most public relations or corporate communications departments do not have responsibilities outside the communications area. But at Southwest, communications was just one of the functions of the vice president for administration and communication. Her biography said she “provides executive leadership for Communication & Outreach, Culture & Engagement, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, Internal Audit, People (Human Resources), Talent and Leadership Development, Total Rewards, Technology, and the Southwest Airlines University” (Southwest 2022). With responsibilities ranging across nine unrelated areas from human resources to internal audit to communications to technology, it may not be a surprise that Southwest stumbled badly in communicating with customers during the Blizzard of 2022.

Corporate Communications covers a number of areas – public relations, internal relations, investor relations, media relations, crisis communication, reputation management, marketing communication, corporate donations and brand communication. In some organizations it also includes government affairs. It is the one department in an organization whose job it is to “win friends and influence people.”

It has the task of creating and sustaining a favorable view of the company’s brand. That brand is important to the company. If customers have good feelings about the brand, they will be loyal. Think about Apple. People are incredibly loyal to its products because they have positive feelings about the Apple brand. They believe Apple produces innovative cellphones, tablets and desktop computers.

Apple’s vice president for worldwide communications reports directly to the CEO. She’s responsible for the company’s global communications strategy, leading the public relations team as well as employee communications – and nothing else..

In a well-run corporation, the information corporate communications produces is segmented because generic information doesn’t meet anyone’s needs. In normal times, a corporate communications department might have people responsible for each of the following areas:

#### Media relations

- Corporate charitable giving
- Social media
- Investor relations
- Employee relations
- Government relations
- Corporate history

Corporate communications don’t “just happen.” It has predetermined goals. For example, the University of Maryland recently issued a press release that one of its business professors has developed a new machine-learning model that takes into account the specific attributes of products a consumer likes. It then uses those attributes to predict what other sorts of products consumers will want in the future.

Who would Maryland hope see the release, and what is the objective?

- Retail executives, who might provide grants to further the project.
- Potential graduate business students, who Maryland hopes to attract
- Potential faculty members, especially those interested in the use of machine learning in a business context, who might consider applying to join the faculty.
- Alumni of the business school and Maryland faculty and staff members, whose in the school and university would be increased.

Corporate communications need to be accurate. It should be accurate in terms of content, grammar and explanation.

It should be timely, frequent and multi-channel. Why should corporate communication be timely? The Southwest experience gives the answer: Customers wanted to know what were the odds they would get to their destination? When would the planes fly again? Would Southwest cover expenses they incurred booking a ticket on another airline, a hotel room, a rental car? It may well have

been that Friday night and Saturday, as the blizzard raged and its impact started to become clear, Southwest executives may not have known when the stranded planes would fly again. Had they said that, customers would have been able to plan their next steps.

Why should corporate communications be multi-channel? Again, Southwest gives the answer. In the midst of a business emergency, not everyone thinks to check the website, not everyone thinks to check Facebook, not everyone thinks to check Twitter. But customers will check one social media platform or another, and if they don't find the answer to their question, they will voice their displeasure on the platform.

Corporate communication uses a number of channels. It puts out press releases for traditional and online press. It also releases those on Twitter, Facebook and other social media outlets. This helps insure the message is received by different stakeholders the way they prefer to receive messages. The repetition helps insure the message is implanted in the customer's mind. If you're in corporate communications, you want your message to be the first thing the customer thinks of when he thinks about your line of business.

It's likely that when you get your first public relations job it will be in corporate communications (including nonprofit and government) or an agency working for several companies. You'll be writing press releases, brochures, articles for the organization's magazine or website. You'll be putting to use the skills we're teaching in this course.

In today's corporation – in reality, in any large organization – corporate communication is far more than simply people who “pitch” products and seek to “spin” the company out of trouble. They seek to create the sort of environment that, when trouble does emerge, people will be willing to give the organization the benefit of the doubt.

#### References

Southwest Airlines, (2022, January 2, 2023). Linda Rutherford, Chief administration & communications officer. <https://swamedia.com/pages/linda-rutherford>

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## 7.2: Media Relations

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Dealing with the media can be a tough job in the best of times. And yet it's essential that organizations make friends with the media that routinely cover the organization so that when there's bad news the reporter will, of course, report it but from the perspective of someone who views the bad news as an anomaly, not the way the organization normally does business.

The first public relations people were hired to deal with the press. That remains a core function of corporate or strategic communications today.

Part of the media relations job is putting out press releases announcing happy news. The company announces it is going to open a new plant in a community, creating 75 new jobs. The media relations person will write a press release announcing the new plant and the 75 new jobs. A press conference will be planned at the site of the new plant. The company's CEO will be there, as will the governor, the mayor and other dignitaries. Reporters and leading business people will be invited to the event.

The press release that was written will be distributed as will a **press kit** that contains additional information about the company – its history, its leading products, its leadership, etc. The press kit seeks to put all the information a reporter might need in one convenient package.

The American Library Association put together a Covid-19 Press Kit to detail what libraries were doing to support their communities.

[Click Here for American Library Association Press Kit](#)

Henry Ford, who founded Ford Motor Co., built the world's largest automobile plant. When that plant turned 100, Ford Motor Co. put together a media kit about the facility:

[Click Here for Ford Motor Co. Press Kit Celebrating 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Rouge Complex](#)

The other part of the job is responding to media inquiries, which can come at any time of the day or night. I interviewed Chuck Carney, media relations director at Indiana University about how IU handled the outbreak of Covid. As part of the interview, he described his background and his job.

[The Communications Strategy That Subdued Covid on 1 College Campus](#)

When there is bad news, the best strategy is to get the information out to the media as quickly as possible and update it on a regular basis with what is being done to correct the situation. Here, again, the inverted pyramid structure can be helpful.

In the Southwest situation, Southwest, like all other airlines, experiences situations where it has to cancel large numbers of flights. Media relations should have swung into action the moment it became clear sometime Saturday that it would be several days before the Southwest network would be back to normal. By Sunday or Monday morning, media relations should have focused on what the airline was doing to correct the situation, perhaps by letting a TV crew into Southwest's operations center to see employees working feverishly while an executive explains the problem the blizzard created for the airline. This probably should have been the pattern for several days until the executives could see the possibility that flights would resume.

Having an effective media relations program is essential when there's good news. It's even more important when there's bad news. Getting the news to the broad public, which is what media relations does, also gets it to all the other publics – in this case, stranded passengers, employees and regulators.

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## 7.3: Internal Communication

Who doesn't want to be part of "the best?" Why do soccer fans go crazy when their team wins the Stanley Cup or baseball fans when their team wins the World Series? Why do companies seek to be known as "the best place for (women, LGBTQ+, etc.) to work? Why do firms post banners if they are selected as one of Maryland's Best Workplaces?

The answer is simple: Nearly everyone wants to be part of a great organization. That goes for employees, shareholders and even customers. Think of the intense loyalty generated by Walt Disney Co. or Apple.

But that loyalty doesn't just happen. The company has to celebrate its wins – its big achievements and its small achievements. When one of its products is designated best in class by *Consumer Reports*, that's a win. And a smart company lets its employees know about it.

And not only its corporate achievements, but also the achievements of its employees, even if those achievements aren't directly related to the business operations of the organization. When an economics professor is chosen to be a member of the President's Council of Economic Advisors or wins the Nobel Prize in economics, that is a tribute to the standing of that professor in his profession – and it reflects glory upon his institution that it has on its faculty such an outstanding scholar as this. The same thing would be true if the economist worked for a major bank such as Bank of America or Goldman Sachs.

As companies have grown larger, the need for employee communications to keep everyone "on the same page" has also grown. In a small business information about strategies, results, new products, etc., can easily be disseminated by word of mouth in a company meeting. As a company grows, this can be achieved by posting notices on bulletin boards. But the moment the company divides into departments, each with its own office – much less physical location – an organized strategy is needed.

How do organizations do this?

One way is by a newsletter. Editing of *The Wall Street Journal* is done around the world on a 24/7 basis. To keep everyone – reporters, copy editors, managers, etc. – up to speed on the latest decisions on style issues by the editor-in-chief and the standards desk, *Style & Substance* is issued monthly. It includes some flubs, praise for clever headlines and notifications, etc. You can see a sample issue [here](#).

The University of Maryland publishes Research Roundup weekly. See a sample [here](#). Bowie State University publishes BSYou to keep Bowie State faculty, staff and students informed about the university's latest news and events. You can see a sample [here](#).

Some organizations publish an employee magazine. Some might think it's out of date, replaced by an e-zine on the internet. But for many frontline employees, company magazines are still alive and well, and if mailed to the house, on coffee tables. Employee magazines can build pride in an employer not only in the actual worker, but also in his family.

Other organizations, principally the military, use closed-channel television programs.

Effective employee communications does not have to involve creating all-new content. When Bowie State University wanted to announce a major grant from Kevin Durant, it did so via a press release. That press release was also printed in an internal newsletter for faculty and staff, BSYou.

In the past 30 years, there has been a major change in the attitude of employees toward the organizations they work for. This change has been a result of globalization and downsizing. This means the days of effective employee communications involving just slick printed brochures have come to an end.

To be effective, employee communications must answer the questions employees are asking, such as these:

- How is the organization doing and where is it going?
- What is our charter and how does it match up to other functions?

American business can't rebuild employee loyalty through effective communication alone. The communication must be supported by action. Workers, Wright (1995) found, need to be treated as another important public.

Vision and values must be incorporated into employee communications, and research must be conducted to determine if employees are receiving the most important internal communication messages targeted to employees each week.

In the case of the Blizzard of 2023, you can be sure that many Southwest employees received abuse from customers – “why don’t you know when I can get out of here? If I rent a car, will you pay for it? What do you mean you don’t know where my bags are?” So internal communications objective would be to restore the morale of the staff. How might it do this? It could highlight the actions of some employees who went above and beyond to help customers, it could highlight the work done in the emergency operations center. If Southwest was the first airline to have a significant number of flights cancelled every day for nearly a week, internal communications could make sure employees knew they had experienced a (hopefully) once in a lifetime event. And it could publish notes from customers expressing their appreciation for outstanding customer service rendered by various staff members.

The airline’s CEO needed to quickly pivot and visit the stations that were closed because of the blizzard to thank the workers there for doing their best to care for their customers. Those visits, by the way, should include another media opportunity: local media could be invited to come, watch the CEO talk with employees and then hold a press conference. To set up those media events, media relations would have to work closely with the CEO’s office.

#### References:

Wright, D. K. (1995, Fall). The role of corporate public relations executives in the future of employee communications. *Public Relations Review*, 21(3), 181+. <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A1743...M&xid=04ca4d45>

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## 7.4: Social Media

In some respects, the easiest way to think of the media landscape today is to recall how it was at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Century. At least 15 daily general circulation newspapers scrapped for readers (and revenue) in 1900. Today, as a result of mergers, acquisitions and business failures there are just seven. Depending upon what you are promoting, you might want to be in all of them, or just one or two.

It's the same way with social media. YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Mastodon and more vie for the consumer's time and attention. And that's in addition to email and hundreds of cable television channels.

Social media can play a vital role in any corporate communications program. It gives the company the opportunity to have a conversation with its fans. If somebody tweets they love a food company's new product, the social media person can immediately respond – "Thanks. So glad you like it." On the other hand, if the purchaser of a product that was defective tweets out a message trashing the product, the social media person can do two things: First, he can say he's sorry it didn't meet the customer's expectations, and, second, he can ask the person to private message the social media staffer to provide more details or to give the company the opportunity to "make it right."

Simply responding to customers in this manner goes a long way to enhancing the reputation of a company. One was a spokesperson for Southwest admitting "we f'ed up." She also said, "We don't watch the weather. The way our system is set up is we don't have a system. We operate on more of a let go, and let done policy."

I wrote this chapter six days after Southwest began "normal operations." I scrolled Twitter for Southwest Airlines all the way back to Dec. 29. I had no trouble finding hundreds of tweets condemning the company for the travel chaos that occurred during the blizzard, for choosing to buy back stock or pay dividends rather upgrade its crew scheduling system and for not making refunds quickly enough. But I could find only one tweet from Southwest itself.

U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg did the tweet on Dec. 31, 2022, that Southwest should have done about cancelled flights:

All airlines average: 2%

**Southwest Airlines: 1%**

Buttigieg took almost as much criticism as Southwest itself did, largely accusing him of not regulating airlines enough.

Southwest should continue posting its cancelled flights average daily to Twitter and its website for several weeks to establish that Southwest's performance normally is pretty good.

Once Southwest got back to operating normally, it posted a job opening for a public relations advisor to handle media queries. The posting was immediately mocked by social media users. Southwest said it was looking for someone with "entry level experience."

### PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Which social media platform do you use most? If you were to be hired today, who would be the employer? Go onto your favorite social platform and see how your company uses social media. Are they doing a good job? How would you improve it? How often a day do you think that company should check its social media account?

Be prepared to discuss what you find in class or to write a 500-word paper on the subject.

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## 7.5: Investor Relations

A very specialized form of public relations is **investor relations**. People who work in this area have only one public to worry about – the investment community, broadly defined. That includes institutional investors, such as the people who buy and sell stocks for mutual funds or certain other publicly traded companies; securities analysts, and the general public. They are also responsible for insuring the company complies with legal requirements set forth in the Securities Act of 1934 and other laws, regulations of the Securities and Exchange Commission, such as “quiet periods,” and state agencies.

Investor Relations is the department responsible for:

- Preparing the company’s quarterly report that is distributed to the press, investors and the public (including being posted on the web). Here is Walt Disney Co.’s [second quarter earnings](#) report.
- Preparing the company’s full-year report that is distributed to the press, investors and the public. Both the quarterly and full-year reports are generally distributed by being posted to the investor relations section of the company’s web site. Here is the [full-year report](#) for Walt Disney Co.
- When a company releases its earnings report it also conducts a conference call with securities analysts to discuss the report. Investor Relations is responsible for insuring that the call is scheduled, for announcing how investors (including members of the public) can listen to the call. The chief investor relations officer typically introduces the people who will be participating in the call, such as the company’s chief executive and chief financial officer. Here’s an [announcement](#) from the Walt Disney Co.
- Preparing the annual report that is distributed to all shareholders. The report is also sometimes distributed to media, potential employees, government officials and others with an interest in the company. Here’s an [annual report](#). This annual report is, quite frankly, a sales tool designed to highlight the company’s achievements.

There’s a second type of quarterly and annual report, which is filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission. This report provides much more detail about the company, including the risks of investing in its stock. It is prepared by the company’s legal department. Here’s a sample of an [SEC filing](#). Serious investors, securities analysts and business reporters will study both types of reports, but especially the SEC filings..

- Companies also regularly take part in conferences sponsored by banks, investment firms or media. If the conference is aimed at investors, Investor Relations likely provides support to the people participating. [Here’s an announcement](#) that Walt Disney Co. is taking part in such a conference with a link to a recording of the presentation.

As you can see, the Investor Relations person or team performs a very specialized form of public relations. Investor Relations is generally housed within Corporate Communications, but in some cases may report to the chief financial officer or it may be a stand-alone department. The investor relations officer must work in close alliance with accounting, legal and the chief communications officer as well as the chief executive officer and chief operating officer.

### PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Find the investor relations part of the website of a company that you are interested in, if it is a company whose stock is held by the public. If it’s a privately owned company, pick a public company in which you have some interest. Go to the investor relations tab, look at the various materials available to the public about the company’s business and finances. Do you think an investor would be well informed about the company?

Now, take a look at how the company’s news is covered by some of the major financial news services. Use the search feature on each of the following websites:

- Wsj.com (Wall Street Journal)
- Bloomberg
- Standard & Poors

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## 8: Video News Releases

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## 8.1: Video News Releases

Traditionally, press releases have simply been written communications sent to members of the media with the hope they will lead to a story. But times change, and some PR people now send three items with every major release: the written release, an audio file and a video release. The video news release is quite controversial because it is designed to look like a real news report, but it is created by a public relations team a marketing team, a business or an agency within the government.

The video news release (VNR) is given to television newsrooms. The intention of the creator is to shape the opinion of the public, to promote products or services a business offers, to publicize and individual or to support some other interest.

There are several benefits to a VNR, including

- Audio and video elements make it more engaging than a written release
- They show the story you want journalists and their audience to see. They don't have to imagine it.
- By highlighting expertise, they can boost the credibility of a company, organization or individual.
- They are more attention grabbing than standard press releases.
- And, they are more effective than a standard release.
- TV newsrooms may air a VNR in its entirety, they may air only a portion of it, or they may incorporate it into a news report by one of their reporters. How much they air is entirely up to them.

So. How do you get all or part of a VNR on the air? Simply put, avoid being too promotional. If it is, it will be viewed as an advertisement rather than "news" It should include a professional news reporter who has on-air experience with news or an actor. It might have an interview with an expert on the topic who has legitimate expertise in the subject, although he might be somewhat biased. Demonstrations of the products or services that are the subject of the VNR.

In addition to not making it too promotional, you also want to avoid overproducing. Remember, news footage is usually fairly "raw" and an overly produced video will prevent the local news team from putting their own spin on it, which is what they want to do.

Here's a sample VNR produced by Walmart:

### Video News Release - Walmart Announces "Great for You" food labeling initiative

And here's one produced by a firm:

### Video News Release example - Dentists

Writing a video news release script is exactly the same as writing a television script for any purpose. There are some simple rules that are followed by experienced script writers. The first and most important thing to remember is that you are writing for the eye and ear.

- The writing style should be conversational. Write the way you talk.
- Each sentence should be brief – 20 words or less -- and contain only one idea.
- Be simple and direct.
- Be brief. The story that may get hundreds – even thousands – of words in a newspaper may have only 30 seconds – or less
- Put the important information first. The inverted pyramid style is crucial for broadcast news.
- Use a person's complete name on first reference, then their last name thereafter.
- Use phonetic spelling for unfamiliar words and those that are hard to pronounce.
- Titles precede names: "Washington Mayor Joel Whitaker" not "Joel Whitaker, mayor of Washington.
- Avoid direct quotations in a news script if possible. Instead, use a sound bite instead.
- Avoid almost every abbreviation. Write out day, months, states and military titles. Hyphenate abbreviations: "The student was a member of the P-G-C-C basketball team."

### PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Read [this story](#) and write a 30-second video news release following the guidance above.

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## 9: Owned Media

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## 9.1: Writing for Owned Media

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Owned media are those channels over which an organization – a company, a nonprofit or a government agency – exercises complete control. Owned media can include both channels intended to reach those within the organization and those intended to reach people outside the organization. Using owned media often increases the effectiveness of both paid media and earned media.

There are two main channels:

- Content you host, such as websites and blogs, and
- Content you share, such as social media or email marketing.

Using earned media is a smart move. It has staying power. The content on your website, in marketing emails and, if you publish them, magazines reaffirms key messages to your audience. They help build brand awareness. And they encourage consumers to be committed to you. Owned media can increase your search visibility, which helps you reach new audiences. And you can promote your own news and messages.

The fact you exercise complete control over it is extremely important. News media are driven by fashions. When classified documents were found at former President Donald Trump's residence, that dominated television news coverage for days. During the Covid pandemic, mainstream media focused on the need for everyone who could to get a Covid vaccine. Academics with a different viewpoint found it almost impossible to be heard. But on their own media, they could exercise thought leadership, share insights, etc. For a company, college or university, or nonprofit, owned media cannot only enable it to exercise thought leadership but also ensure communications are in line with a company's business messaging.

You can also boost the chances of your message getting out by seeding your content with keywords and topics, helping to reinforce key messages and align your brand with key sectors.

Share your news first with your customers and friends who check your website or receive your marketing emails. It keeps audiences involved and up-to-date. A few craft brewers are particularly good at this, sending out an email every week announcing specials, contests, charitable activities, etc.

Social media **is not** owned media. The only people who own social media are the big tech social media websites. They can remove content whenever they want, which is why it is so important to build your own privately owned media assets. The big tech companies don't enable brands to access their own data.

There are two downsides to owned media. First, blogging can be a slow process, and sometimes it can take months or even years to build an audience. Second, you may have to use Google or Twitter or some other social media platform to drive an audience to your website.

The foundations of an owned media strategy are the (1) content channels an organization owns – the way it delivers content to audiences directly, unmediated by a third party. The most common are websites, catalogs and newsletters. Some hospitals also produce magazines that tell patients stories. Whatever the channel, it should be relevant and valuable and personalized for the user using data.

The second foundational element is community. Using discussion forums or peer benchmarking can help you create your own community.

The third foundational element is context. Paid and earned media give an organization strictly a transactional relationship. An organization that can capture customer data can turn it into a connected experience. Nike+ Run Club at no cost helps athletes, regardless of their level, to be their best. Members get access to products, services and experts to help improve their performance. The Wall Street Journal has a similar program, WSJ+, for subscribers. They get access to complimentary ebooks by notable authors, the opportunity to attend various events such as fireside chats with motion picture directors, book authors, discounted tickets to some festival, profiles of WSJ journalists, discounts on wine, cooking lessons, etc.

How does owned media work? It creates some value for people beyond the products being sold; it uses data not just to target a message but to create a useful service, and they treat people not as passive consumers but active co-creators.

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## 9.2: Blogging

Ford Europe does it. Howard University's business school does it. So does University of Maryland's Psychology Department. And Indiana University's Kelley School of Business. Plus the Washington Post, University of Vermont Larner College of Medicine, Boeing, Jennifer Fulwiler, Kathryn Whitaker, Hartwood Farm, Penske Transportation, Disney Parks and thousands more companies and individuals.

If you're going to be in public relations, you need to know how to blog. And if you're an individual, you need to know that blogging can launch your career or become a business.

And I'm going to tell you how.

First, though, I'm going to tell you what skills you absolutely, positively must have to be a successful blogger, whether you're blogging for a company or for yourself:

- Writing that is grammatically correct and readable
- The ability to write for the web
- The courage to develop a strong point of view
- Willingness to position yourself or your organization as a subject matter expert
- Understanding the basics of search engine optimization
- Using a content management system
- Building and managing an online community

There are many benefits of blogging for business. Here are seven, developed by Hubspot:

- It helps drive people to your website, especially if your blog is part of your website.
- You can repurpose content for social media. Every time you create an article you create content that people can share on social networks such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Pinterest.
- Your blog can generate new leads – new potential customers for your business. Every blog post is indexed by the search engines, and each post is a new opportunity to generate new leads. How? You add a lead-generating call to action to every blog post. Take a look at this home page for Bob Bly, a copywriter.

<https://www.bly.com/>

Notice in the second line at the bottom it says “just click here for a free estimate....” And in the upper right corner, in the yellow post-it note, “Need Great Copy? Click HERE Now!” Both of those are calls to action.

And take a look at these two religious broadcasters webpages. You'll see a call to action, usually a free book.

<https://www.wordonfire.org/about/bishop-robert-barron/>

[Joel Osteen Ministries](#)

- It drives long-term results. The best business blogs answer the usual questions readers and customers have.
- Blogging helps with link building. Google considers 200 factors when ranking a site on its search engine result page. Many experts believe backlinks are the third most crucial factor in search engine optimization, and 41% say link building is the most challenging part of search optimization.
- It drives long-term results. An ad on television is gone in 30 seconds or less. So you have to run a lot of them to make an impression on a potential buyer's mind. Newspapers are thrown away after a day or so, so the smartest newspaper advertisers buy the same position in the paper every day. Magazines last for a month or so. But blog posts can stay around forever. So six months, a year, two years someone may see your post again and choose to act on it.
- Blogging helps you share company news. Hire somebody new? Write a blog post about it. Have a new product? Write a blog post. Are you hosting an event? Get attention for the event through your blog. And link back to those posts through your various social media accounts as well as emails.

Yes, the benefits of having a blog are many for a business. But how about for an individual?

Let me share with you a story which at first blush seems totally unrelated to blogging. I grew up in Indianapolis, Ind. Around 1910, Indianapolis seemed to be about to rival Detroit for leadership in the American automobile industry. It was the home of the Stutz

Bearcat, one of the classic car symbols of the 1920s. While the Detroit automakers focused on mass production of cars for the masses, the Indianapolis automakers specialized in hand-crafted machines for the wealthy. When the Great Depression came along, none of the Indianapolis automakers had a market for hand-crafted luxury cars. Many of the upper class were barely hanging on, and those who were doing better than simply hanging on went out of their way to avoid ostentatious displays of wealth.

An individual considering starting a blog would be well advised to find a topic that has broad interest and appeal and which can also produce a number of “evergreen” posts. What’s an evergreen article or post? It’s one that is as valid five or 10 years from now as the post is today.

Abby Lawson was the mother of two toddlers whose house was perpetually in chaos and cluttered. One day she decided to do something about it. So she set about creating systems and habits that helped her family stay organized for good. And she decided to share those tips with others.

That sharing became a blog, “Just a Girl and Her Blog,” and later became known as “Abby Organizes.” In less than half a decade, it has become a full-time job for her and her husband. Not only does it cover organizing, but it also covers going paperless, decorating, and free printable calendar pages, binders, planner pages, goal setting sheets, party printables etc.

You’ll notice that except for fashion and cooking, “Abby Organizes” could just as easily be a women’s magazine. But how, you ask, does she make money? She is part of the Amazon Associates program and by hyperlinking products she mentions to their Amazon product listing she gets a small commission. Her audience is large enough that Amazon gets a lot of hits from products mentioned on her blog. And since her posts are evergreen, something she wrote five years ago might still be generating referrals.

Another way she makes money is through several courses. Her course on going paperless costs \$149.

Kathryn Whitaker’s story is somewhat similar. She’s a mom of six, who began her blog in 2007. In 2009 she gave birth to a preemie, Luke. Around that time, she began her blog, Team Whitaker. After writing a book and doing some speaking, she renamed her blog Kathryn Whitaker. It has posts on her kids, party planning, organizing, travel, birthday parties, preemies, hospitality, and her book.

And her blog made her a name and that got her started speaking.

Her blog also provided the foundation for her book, both in terms of content and equally importantly in terms of an audience. It’s a safe bet many of her blog readers bought her book. She too monetizes her blog. Some of her posts are sponsored, and she’s an Etsy affiliate and, I presume, an Amazon affiliate, so you click on a link, buy something and she gets a few pennies. Kathryn Whitaker’s blog is also a Mom blog.

I saved the most dramatic career development story for last. Jennifer Fulwiler’s blog got her a book contract, made her a radio host, and turned her into a standup comic.

Jennifer Fulwiler was raised an atheist in Texas. One night, after she got married and had a baby, she was standing on the balcony of her 28<sup>th</sup> floor apartment overlooking the Texas State Capitol and the University of Texas. She looked at her baby, she says, and thought, “It’s all a lie. Everything I’ve been told is a lie. There’s no way this baby is the result of some accidental meeting of a couple of things floating around in the universe.”

And with that she began a desperate search to find out which of the world’s religions was true. Naturally, as an atheist, she knew nothing at all about religion so she had lots of questions, and every day it seemed, there were more questions. So she did what any college-trained computer geek would do – she started a blog. On her blog she would post a question and people sent answers. Over time, she started telling funny stories about her life on that blog, which by now she had named “Conversion Diary.”

Her blog drew more and more readers and she expanded it beyond simply dealing with her conversion. She was asked to give talks about her conversion at parishes in the area. They were pretty good, which led to invitations to give talks at regional meetings, where the meeting planner always assumed she had a fee to come speak. So now she was a professional public speaker.

Those regional talks led to two more things. First, she began to be asked to talk at national conference. And she was invited to be a guest and then hosting while a talk show host on Sirius XM radio took vacation. When that was over, she was offered her own 2-hours-a-day program on Sirius XM. So now she was not only a blogger and professional speaker, but also a professional radio host.

This gave her what is called a “platform.” Book publishers love people with big followings because that almost guarantees a book will have decent sales. So, about the same time that she began giving talks to national meetings with perhaps 17,000 people in

attendance, she became a professional author. She since has written two more books.

With five years of broadcasting under her belt, she decided to be a stand-up comic. She wrote her own lines and rehearsed and rehearsed. She quit her job at SiriusXM just as Covid-19 struck the U.S. and her tour was put on hold for a couple of years. So she started a weekly podcast to keep in touch with her fans. When Covid restrictions were lifted, she began her tour. So now, she's a professional stand-up comic—one of only 296 in the U.S., blogger, book author and speaker.

### **Quality is Essential**

If you're going to blog, you have to do so **regularly** – whether you are writing a blog for a corporation or you're writing one for yourself. Don't try to be overly ambitious: Plan initially on just one post a month, or every two weeks before you try a weekly or daily schedule. Smart bloggers use a calendar to make sure they have their posts planned several weeks in advance. You should too –regardless of whether you're writing for yourself or a company.

You have to be **original** in the thoughts shared and the writing style you use; This is where you speak in your own voice if you're writing a personal blog. If you're writing for a corporation, you want to speak in their voice. To put it simply, you don't write as if you are the New York Times when you blog about hip-hop music.

Know what you intend for a reader to gain from a post. Make sure it **is relevant** for your readers.

**Links.** Nearly all blog posts have links. It's best if you're linking to coverage you published earlier, but it's okay to also link to a few outside sources. Why hold back on links to outside sources? You want to keep you reader on your blog for as long as possible.

**Photos, graphics or videos** should be included if at all possible. Try to avoid using a photo by anyone other than yourself. You should assume everything is copyrighted and the penalty for copyright violations is steep. Don't be afraid to use the camera in your smartphone.

And follow the editing rules I gave you in Section 2.3

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## 10: Social Media

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## 10.1: Social Media

Using social media has several benefits for businesses. It enables them to:

- attract customers, get customer feedback and build customer loyalty.
- increase market reach, including international markets.
- do market research and reduce marketing costs
- increase revenue by building customer networks and advertising.
- develop your brand.
- exchange ideas to improve the way you do business.
- recruit skilled staff, for example through job networking sites like LinkedIn.
- increase traffic to your website and improve its [search engine ranking](#)
- keep an eye on your competitors.

(Business.gov.au)

Much of the above list applies to marketing, not to public relations. That's not to say social media doesn't have a role to play in public relations. It does. But it is just one of many tools that the p.r. practitioner has in his toolbox.

The key to successfully using social media to support your public relations strategy is to determine the main goal of your public relations strategy. Next, you'll want to understand what niche you occupy in your industry and how you can distinguish yourself from your peers and competitors. Then consider who your target audience is, the platforms your target audience engages with most often, and what kinds of content your target audience wants.

For the most part, the target audience for a business is going to be its customers and potential customers; for a politician, the people in his voting district; for a clergyman, people within a reasonable distance of his church, and perhaps especially those who have drifted away. It may sound impressive to say the local brewpub shop has 11 million followers, but it's much more effective to have a narrow description of the people within a reasonable distance from the brewpub – what is their age, race, income levels, education levels, etc. Much of this **demographic data** is available for free from the U.S. Census Bureau ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)).

When using social media, you'll want to engage with **influencers**. Choosing the right influencer is important to your social media strategy. There are three types of influencers:

- social media, the people who engage with and share your social media content. They help extend the reach of your message.
- Reporters with established expertise in your industry. They tend to have a dedicated following that trusts their endorsements – and they have access to publishing platforms which can broadcast your message to their readers. The Whiskey Wash is an example of this. Founded by Nino Kilgore-Marchetti, The Whiskey Wash is a blog that has developed a dedicated following; its founder is trusted – he judges various competitions. The publication has grown to include two columnists, also experts; a reporter, and 13 reviewers. The publication has advertising support and is free to readers.
- Third-party influencers are people with expertise in the field who are frequently cited by media. They aren't associated with your company or the media, but associating with this type of influencer can lend credibility to your messaging;

Influencers are important because they can increase the reach and impact of your messages by improving their visibility and credibility.

Just like with a blog, you need to post your social media messages on a regular schedule.

### Setting a Social Media Strategy

Public relations practitioners should be the primary people involved in developing an organization's brand. Many people think of an organization's visual symbol – Ford's blue oval, the red cross in a white circle for the American Red Cross, [Howard University's](#) Blue letters on a white background with a touch of red, [West Point's](#) black and gold, Indiana University's [trident](#), Bowie State University's [wordmark and flame](#) – as its brand. But a brand is much more than that. It summarizes how people feel about an organization and what they expect from it.

Why should public relations people be the primary people in developing a brand? When it comes to brand management, public relations has two roles:

It creates the narrative, i.e., the conversation

- ~~It creates the narrative, i.e., the conversation.~~ And it is the purveyor of the medium to facilitate the conversation; i.e., social media.

Since 2000, there has been a marked decline in the trust consumers have in business. That means word-of-mouth among consumers is more important than ever, and given the rise of social media brand conversations now take place not just among neighbors but in some cases people thousands of miles away. To deal with this decline in trust, leaders are turning to the concept of authenticity, which at least one scholar believes should come from public relations because story telling is part of the public relations practitioners tool kit.

Social media is diametrically opposite the traditional one-way, sender-oriented marketing and advertising protocol, in which a message does not occur unless the sender (the advertiser or marketer) wishes it to happen. Now, the conversations take place regardless of what the advertiser or marketer wishes. The proliferation of television channels and niche publications, the fact that 24-hour news is just a click away, and the growth of the internet means organizations have no place to hide. They have to be ready to rebut damaging stories and they must make sure their message gets across.

How important is this? A recent study by Harris on the top 200 companies on Fortune's most-admired companies list spent twice as much as those in the bottom 200.

Plainly, public relations is important to both brand strategy and to building and sustaining corporate reputations. A successful public relations strategy involves four elements:

1. Identify the various attributes and characteristics of the brand—its values and supporting behaviors, its positioning and identity. Then determine how important these are to an organization's culture and opportunities for motivating performance. Only then can a public relations platform be built on a brand's characteristics and promise.
2. The perception of external stakeholders must be assessed. This should extend beyond products to include things that drive reputation, such as leadership, innovation, financial value, quality of management and corporate citizenship.
3. Corporate communications should use the brand's attributes and characteristics internally to inform employees of the company's position on different issues. This should be done to support change initiatives, underscore credibility in crisis and guide behavior.
4. An annual, measurable public relations plane should be created, anchored by the brand promise with the objective of shaping key audiences' perception of leadership, customer connections, marketplace innovation and corporate responsibility.

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#### PRACTICAL EXERCISE – Questions to Ponder

What do you consider the primary attributes and characteristic of the Walt Disney brand?

Now, consider this: While a bill restricting instruction about sexual orientation was working its way through the Florida legislature, Walt Disney Co. was silent. Its LGBTQ employees weren't however; Many took to social media to criticize the company for its silence. Nonemployee joined in on the Disney bashing. On the very day Gov. Ron DeSantis signed the bill into law Bob Chapek, Disney's CEO, called for repeal of the law.

From a public relations perspective, do you believe Chapek's action helped or hurt Disney Co.'s image and why?

A bit more that a month later, Gov. DeSantis signed another bill – this one eliminating the Reedy Creek Improvement District and five other special districts. Reedy Creek operated like a county – it set its own taxes, maintained its own police and fire department, approved Disney's plans to expand Walt Disney World, etc.

Do you think most Floridians supported Gov. DeSantis or the Disney Co. in this dispute? Why?

Do you think corporate CEOs should speak out on the issues of the day that have no immediate connection to their company's business interests?

Do you think Chapek was wise to bend to the will of some of his employees? Why or why not?

Do you think this dispute hurt the image of the Walt Disney Co. Why or why not?

A few weeks after this, the Disney Co. board fired Chapek and reinstalled Bob Iger who had been CEO..

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## CHAPTER OVERVIEW

### 11: Video in Public Relations

#### **Video in Public Relations**

##### [11.1: Video in Public Relations](#)

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## 11.1: Video in Public Relations

“Seeing is believing,” goes the old saying. “A picture is worth 1,000 words” is another one you might have heard. Especially for broadcast media, you increase your odds of getting your message aired if you have a video clip to go along with it.

When Kevin Durant, a native of Prince George’s County, committed to giving Bowie State University \$500,000 toward renovations of the Leonidas S. James Physical Education Complex, including installation of a new basketball court, expansion of seating capacity, and upgrades to the press box area it was big news. It was reported on major TV stations in both Washington and Baltimore, was covered in Afro-American newspapers in both cities and was featured in Black Enterprise. And [it was posted](#) on YouTube.

David Thompson, the Bowie State public relations staffer who covered the donation, didn’t just send out a press release, he also sent out an audio file with excerpts from the speech when the donation was announced, and for the television outlets he sent out a video file. When the release was posted on Bowie State’s website, it included the video.

“I always send out an audio file and a video file with every release,” Thompson told me. “I know reporters are always under time pressure and anything I can do to make their job easier increases the likelihood our release will be used.”

Video is vitally important. More than 80% of traffic online is video traffic. The content people want has changed from images to videos to livestream, according to Dex Torricke-Barton, a former executive with Facebook, Google and SpaceX..That’s one reason The Wall Street Journal video department now has seven senior executives with amazing biographies. You can read their biographies [here](#). (A sidenote: 40

When Anheuser-Busch, the largest beer company in the United States, decided to create a scholarship program to develop more Black brewmasters, it announced the program with a press release and a video that ran on social networks.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bp9ZYD8URF4>

It’s not just large, multi-billion-dollar corporations that use videos. Check out this informative video about the dangers of aluminum wiring:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e24miJCmX3M>

Watching the video, you might think it was produced to promote Hawkins Electric, a 100-year-old electrical contractor in the Washington, D.C., area. But it wasn’t. It was produced by Alex Saenger, a realtor. He partnered with Hawkins Electric, so if someone needs electrical work done and searched YouTube for an electrician, if they click on this video, not only are they exposed to helpful information from Hawkins Electric, but they also are introduced to Alex Saenger’s real estate business.

A look at Saenger’s real estate website is interesting. Again, he gives away a lot of free information. It’s all designed to develop a connection with someone who either owns a home or is thinking about buying one, or faces a challenge in connection with their current home.

Take a look at this video about how to deal with a common plumbing emergency, a burst pipe.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VVYvJrCDUd8>

Roger Wakefield is a plumber in Richardson, Texas, a Dallas suburb. A few years ago, his business was failing, which was aggravating since he had been in business for more than 40 years. Even more aggravating was that he was paying as much as \$4,000 a month for marketing that didn’t work.

Then he attended a conference that touted the benefits of social media and began posting three plumbing-related videos a week. He went from paying \$4,000 an ad to gaining \$10 to \$50,000 a month from YouTube. And his plumbing business is doing fine, too. Check out his website for Texas Green Plumbing, scroll down and near the bottom and check out his videos;

<https://www.texasgreenplumbing.com/>.

The videos say “RescueAir.” Rescue Air is another plumbing service in the Dallas area. Wakefield sold Texas Green to Rescue Air at the end of 2021. Of course that was announced with a video, too:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qRQdymHpMjk>

Beneath the video is the press release. Why would Wakefield sell his plumbing business? He's been doing it for 40 years, he's making as much as \$50,000 a month off of his YouTube videos, which will continue to generate income for him for years after he ends their production.

Video can be a powerful tool. Used wrongly, however, it can hurt you. Wrongly doesn't mean just avoiding some social quicksand. It also means putting up poorly produced video. One of the worst mistakes is to put up video that doesn't tell a story. That's why experts say 90% of your time should be spent thinking about what you're going to and 10% spent making it. That means you have to plan.

There are a number of videos on YouTube that explain how to do this. Take a look at this one from Becki and Chris who have 375,000 subscribers to their channel.

### **How To Plan A YouTube Video - My Pre Production Process**

For a more thorough approach, of course, you could take a course. Prince George's Community College offers three non-credit continuing education courses which can lead to a certificate in videography. PGCC also offers a for-credit media production certificate.

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## 12: Creating a Writing Portfolio

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## 12.1: Creating a Writing Portfolio

Writers write. It has always been true that the way to get a media job is to have samples of your writing. Perhaps 75 years ago, you would take a scrapbook of what you thought was your best work with you to a job interview. The interviewer, who would usually be the hiring manager, would read one or two stories and that would help inform his decision. Fifty years ago, you might send a photocopy of your best stories along with your resume. Today you're going to provide a link to an online collection of your work.

You can look on the internet and find a lot of very fancy websites, usually created by companies that wanted to design a website for you for a fee. Remember what your goal is: To showcase your work to get a job.

Peggy Noonan a columnist for The Wall Street Journal, appears on Sunday morning political talk shows, writes books and gives speeches. Here's a link to her website, notice how simple it is:

- The home page simply has her name, a strip providing links to other pages, and a recent column.
- Her biography page is short and to the point also. Here's where you learn she's a Pulitzer Prize winner. Many writers would put that on the home page. What her biography doesn't tell you is that she wrote the address President Reagan gave to the name after the Challenger exploded in the sky, killing four astronauts. From here biography we learn she's a modest person.
- A page devoted to her books, ebooks and audiobooks. She reads her own books, and from her tone you learn what she was thinking as she wrote the words. Yes, they do link to Amazon, and yes, I suspect she's an Amazon, so I suspect she's an Amazon affiliate and earns a small commission if you order the book through her link.
- A page she calls "Archive." Here's where you can find the publications she's written for, the number of articles each has published, and if you click on the magazine name, you are taken to the headline on the story, the publication and date and a snippet of the first paragraph, click on the title, and you're taken to the full title.
- A Contact Me page and a Search page.

I think it's an outstanding website for what it's intended for, and I think you can adapt it to create your online portfolio..You should have one, too. While you're looking for a job and after you get the job.

But what if you get a job at a newspaper? Or TV Station? Won't they put up a page all about you? Yes, many will. Here's the Washington Post page on Chris Mooney, who writes about energy and the environment. And here's what the Post didn't do for Mooney:

- It didn't give samples of his work during the 10 years that he freelanced.
- It didn't give a link to his story that won the 2020 Pulitzer Prize for explanatory reporting.
- It didn't give us the names of his books or make it easy to buy them.

He's on Amazon, owned by Jeff Bezos, who also owns the Washington Post. Does the Amazon page mention that Mooney works for the Post? Of course not.

The point is this: If you're going to be a professional writer, you're going to want your own webpage, so start now.

Having your webpage is one step in developing your brand. Everybody has a brand, even people who think they don't. Ann Bastianelli will tell you a bit more about the importance of your personal brand in this video:

### [Powerful Personal Branding](#)

If you paid attention you probably heard her say, "You're always being interviewed, even when you think you aren't." That sounded to me like a story, so I called her up and got her to explain what she meant.

### [Ann Bastianelli on the Unexpected Connections that Build a Career](#)

Both her TED talk and my interview with her are excellent and well worth your time.

Your own web page is part of developing your personal brand. So is being able to sum up who you are in under a minute. It's called a "Personal Brand Pitch" or "Elevator Speech."

Here are a few personal brand pitches. Some are very simple; they could have been filmed with a cellphone. Others resemble a Hollywood production.

### [Erin Thomas](#)

Brittany Pham

Emma Scout

Liana Saji

So, what is a personal brand pitch and how do you put one together? A personal brand pitch runs about a minute. During that minute you:

Introduce yourself

- Tell what your major is
- Tell what your school is
- Tell a story about yourself that is reflective of who you are. This is best done using the STAR framework – Situation, Task, Action, and Result. (The STAR framework can also be used in a job interview where are asked to describe the skills, abilities and personal traits that are sought for the position for which you are applying.)

Think about experiences you've had in your life (projects, events. Jobs/internships, service, adventures, major life events, etc. and the personality theme associated with what you did that made an impact.

*These can be bullet points. This will help you think about what differentiates you, the stories you have, and your values and impact.*

#### PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Prepare a 1 minute personal brand pitch .It should be uploaded to YouTube or Vimeo for review by your instructor.

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## 12.2: Job Opportunities

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This course has focused on basic training in journalistic writing and how that is applied both to regular journalism – newspapers and online news sites – but also to public relations.

The question you, the reader, should have is: What are the employment opportunities where I can apply my skills? As a general rule, someone starting in a field is well advised to work for an organization for a few years before going out on one's own.

You're going to answer that question by researching job opportunities for writers and editors in the Baltimore and Washington, D.C.. Metro Areas.

### PRACTICAL EXERCISE

You're a reporter for The Washington Post which is planning to publish a special careers edition. Among the stories for Writer/Editor will be a piece explaining what writer/editors do, how much they are paid, and the minimum qualifications for a job.

Your assignment is to write the story. Your editor wants you to describe what its like working at least three different companies plus one federal agency. Your editor also says it would be "nice" if you could discover how many writer/editor jobs are open in the DC and Baltimore regions. He then says he couldn't find the answer, but hopes you can.

No more than 800 words. AP Style. You do not have to interview anyone for this assignment.

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# Glossary

**Sample Word 1** | Sample Definition 1

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## Detailed Licensing

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### Overview

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