

Scientific Management Approach

The Scientific Method approaches learning as a series of small steps. That is, one study or one source provides only an *indication* of what may or may not be true; the "truth" is found only through a series of objective analyses.

- > This means that the scientific method is **self-correcting** in that changes in thought or theory are appropriate when errors in previous research are uncovered. Example: Scientists changed their ideas about the planet Saturn when, on the basis of information gathered by the Voyager spacecrafts, they uncovered errors in earlier observations. In communication, researchers discovered that the early perceptions of the power of the media (the "hypodermic needle" theory) were incorrect and, after numerous research studies, concluded that behavior and ideas are changed by a combination of communication sources and that people may react to the same message in different ways.
- > Science attempts to provide **more reliable answers** than those provided by other generally used ways of knowing. To the extent that you can use the scientific method for decision making in public relations management, then you elevate the function from the intuitive enterprise of the artist and make it part of an organization's **management system**. In this approach, research is at the core of how the function is managed.
 - First, research is done to **define the problem situation** for the purpose of developing a public relations program.
 - Second, research is done to **monitor program implementation** for performance accountability and for strategic adjustments.
 - Third, research is done to **measure program impact** or effectiveness with respect to goals and objectives.

Research adds a layer of complexity to the practice of public relations.

Several basic characteristics or tenets of the scientific method are especially important in public relations research:

- > **Science is objective.**
Science tries to rule out eccentricities of judgment by researchers.
- > **Science is empirical.**
Researchers are concerned with a world that is knowable and potentially measurable. (Empiricism is derived from the Greek word for "experience")
- > **Science is systematic and cumulative.**
No single research study stands alone, nor does it rise or fall by itself.
- > **Science is predictive.**
Science is concerned with relating the present to the future. In fact, scientists strive to develop theories because, for one reason, they are useful in predicting behavior.

Scientific Method Research Procedures

The use of the scientific method of research is intended to provide an objective, unbiased evaluation of data. To investigate research questions and hypotheses systematically, both academic and private sector researchers follow a basic 8-step developmental chain of procedures:

1. Select a problem
2. Review existing research and theory (when relevant).
3. Develop hypotheses or research questions.
4. Determine an appropriate methodology/research design.
5. Collect relevant data.
6. Analyze and interpret the results.
7. Present the results in appropriate form.
8. Replicate the study (when necessary).

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