

## Four-Step Planning Process In Public Relations

A quick look at the standard four-step process in public relations

*It is often expressed in words or acronym. Here are notes about the graphic for it*

### 1. We start with a question mark

- a. What's the problem -- or opportunity?
- b. Is there a problem -- or opportunity?
- c. How do we know? Facts? Guesswork? Intuition?
- d. Do we need more facts?
- e. This becomes the **research** phase.

### 2. Then we think: **What will take us in the right direction?**

- a. [Dotted line with arrow]
- b. What's at the end of our arrow?  
A = audiences and what we want from them:  
A = awareness, attitude, action
- c. This is the **planning** stage.
- d. In a well-designed plan, it includes **specific objectives** -- with a desired outcome, an attainment level and a time frame -- for each of the various audiences.

### 3. Then we come to "**doing it**" -- the solid arrow.

- a. This is where most people are inclined to start.
- b. Oddly enough, they are likely to flounder, because they haven't thought through the first two stages.

*Starting at step 3 is sometimes termed "beginning at no beginning and working to no ending." (We've all been there.)*

- c. Once you've done the first two steps, this stage is pretty simple.
- d. This stage is sometimes termed **action** or **communication** or **execution**.

### 4. Then we are back to a question mark.

#### a. **Did it work?**

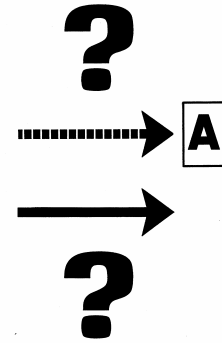
- (1) If so, how well?
- (2) If not, why not?
- (3) How do we know? Facts? Estimates? Guesswork? Intuition?
- (4) Do we need to keep on doing it?
- (5) Do we need to do it in a different way, at a different time, with different people . . . ?
- (6) Would something altogether different be better?

#### b. This is the **evaluation** phase.

- (1) It cycles back to the beginning, as you can easily see.
- (2) Planning is cyclical.

Put the larger copy of this graphic on your wall. Start keeping this in mind whenever you answer the telephone, write anything, draft a campaign or start to remedy a situation.

*Try to decide where you want to go before you begin anything.*



--Ferne G. Bonomi, APR, Fellow PRSA, Bonomi & Co., Ames Iowa July 2003