Getting Organized for Writing

Chapter 1
The Framework of PR Writing

- Writing and the preparation of messages for distribution, while the focus of our book and class, are just part of the PR process.

- RACE: Research, Action, Communication, Evaluation

- PR writing--part of communication step

- And is undertaken only after research has been conducted and extensive planning to formulate the campaigns goals/objectives.
Writing is One of Five Skills

- PR people are professional communicators and should be the best writers, speakers, media experts, comm. theorists in the organization

- Other Key PR Skills:
  - Knowledge of Public Relations
  - Knowledge of Current Events
  - Knowledge of Business
  - Knowledge of Management
The PR Writer’s Purpose

- Advocacy, not objectivity
- To accurately inform
- But also to persuade and motivate
- PR activity description: “Working with clients on strategy and messages, and then delivering these messages to target audiences in order to persuade them to do something beneficial to the client”
PR Audiences

- Can be more varied than the audience of mass media journalists which can be numerous and anonymous, its members with little in common.
- PR writers may write for numerous and radically different audiences—employees, community leaders, customers, investors...
- PR channels can be varied—traditional mass media but also direct mail, newsletters, videos, posters, blogs, podcasts, e-mail, Facebook, etc.
- PR pros today need to grasp the diverse opportunities of today’s media mix in order to figure out how to reach a desired demographic.
Computers

- Like computers? You better, because PR pros spend much of their working day in front of a computer.
- Independent PR practitioners spend about 70 percent of their time tied directly or indirectly to working on a computer, according to one survey for the PRSSA.
- Whether a PC or laptop or Apple or a PC depends on preferences, mobility.
Reference Sources

- Encyclopedias
- Dictionary
- Stylebooks
  - “The Elements of Style” by Strunk/White
  - AP Stylebook and Libel Manual
- Media Directories
- Internet Groups/Blogs
  - Page full on p. 14
- Newspapers/Mags
- Professional Pubs
  - PR Week
  - PR Tactics
Prelude to Writing: Research

- PR writers are constantly looking up information, whether for a news release or for background on what kinds of issues and trends might affect a current employer or prospective client.

- Internet search engines and electronic data bases accessible and valuable research resources.
Writing Outline— the Purpose?

- What is the desired communication outcome? What do we want our audience to do or not do?
- Who is our target audience? Define audience in terms of age, gender, education level, geography
- What are our target audience’s needs, concerns, interests?
- What is our message? Do we want to inform or persuade?
- What communication channel is most effective?
- Who is our most believable spokesperson?
Writing Basics

- Sentences—keep them clear and concise. Best average length is 15-17 words.
- Paragraphs—Short is better than long. PR writers should follow newspaper style—two or three sentences per graf. Short, punchy paragraphs are particularly important for online news releases and newsletters.
- One study found it takes people 50 percent more time to read material on a computer screen.
- Avoid jargon, overly technical words; keep voice active and present tense; use strong visual descriptions when possible (Coca-Cola example on p. 25).
- Also avoid hype, exaggeration, too many numbers, politically incorrect language.
- Review Tips for Success on pages 24-25.