

Public Relations Research

- **What is research?**

Research is simply the process of finding solutions to a problem after thorough study and analysis of the situational factors. It is gathering information needed to answer a question, and thereby help in solving a problem.

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- **Importance of Research in Public Relations Management:**

Research is an essential part of public relations management.

Research allows us to engage in dialogue with publics, understanding their beliefs and values, and working to build understanding on their part of the internal workings and policies of the organization.

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- Research makes public relations activities *strategic by ensuring that* communication is specifically targeted to publics who want, need, or care about the information.
- Research allows us to *show results, to measure impact, and to refocus* our efforts based on those numbers.

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- Research in public relations can be **formal** or **informal**.
- **Formal research:**

Formal research is planned research of a quantitative or qualitative nature, normally asking specific questions about topics of concern for the organization.

Formal research is both *formative*, at the outset of a public relations initiative, and *evaluative*, to determine *the degree of change* attributable to public relations activities.

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- **Informal Research:**

It is collected on an ongoing basis by most public relations managers, from sources both inside and outside of their organizations.

Informal research usually gathers information and opinions through conversations.

It consists of asking questions, talking to members of publics or employees in the organization to find out their concerns, reading e-mails from customers or comment cards, and other informal methods, such as scanning the news and trade press.

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- **Informal Research:**

Informal research methods are usually non numerical and are not generalizable to a larger population, but they yield a great deal of useful information.

The data produced from informal research can be used to examine or revise organizational policy, to craft messages in the phraseology of publics, to respond to trends in an industry, to include the values or priorities of publics in new initiatives, and numerous other derivations.

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- **Types of Research:**

Quantitative Research

Qualitative Research

Mixed Methods/Triangulation

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- **Quantitative Research:**

Research that is based on statistical generalization. It allows numerical observations to be made in order for organizations to improve relationships with certain publics and then measure how much those relationships have improved or degraded.

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- **Methods of Quantitative Data Collection**

Internet-based surveys

Telephone surveys

Mail surveys

Content analysis (usually of media coverage)

Comment cards and feedback forms

Warranty cards (usually demographic information on buyers)

Frequent shopper program tracking (purchasing data)

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- **Qualitative Research:**

Research that allows the researcher to generate in-depth, quality information in order to understand public opinion.

This type of research is not generalizable but it often provides quotes that can be used in strategy documents.

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- **Methods of Qualitative Data Collection**

In-depth interviews

Focus groups

Case studies

Participant observation

Monitoring toll-free (1122) call transcripts

Monitoring complaints by e-mail and letter

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- **Mixed Methods/Triangulation:**

A research method that combines quantitative and qualitative research.

This method is considered to yield the most reliable research results.

SUMMARY

To sum up the above discussion we may say that public relations professional uses research to pinpoint issues and involve in problem resolving, to prevent and manage crises, to make organizations responsive and responsible to their publics, to create better organizational policy, and to build and maintain long-term relationships with publics.

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THAT'S ALL
THANK YOU