



What is Public Relations?

In a nutshell, public relations is communicating with people, relating to the public, and building relationships. The goal of good PR is to connect with the community by building positive relationships and promoting two-way communication.

Tools of the Trade

- News Releases: Print - newspapers and magazines; broadcast - radio and TV
- Public Service Announcements: Print - Newspapers and magazines; broadcast - radio and TV
- Media Advisories
- Social media: blogs, social networking sites, etc.
- Fact sheets
- Photographs
- Letters to the Editor
- Op-ed pieces
- Interviews/Features
- Chapter newsletters
- Special events such as conferences or 5Ks
- Websites/Email
- Audiovisual materials such as PowerPoint presentations
- News Conferences



10 Steps for Public Relations Planning

1. **Establish a public relations role in your chapter.** This is the easiest step in the process! At all times, the chapter leadership must be committed to the PR function. PR must be given the same importance given to leadership development, membership, and other chapter roles.
2. **Define the objectives of the public relations program.**
What do you hope to accomplish? A good tool to define objectives is a chapter officers' Brain storming session. This will result in objectives the leadership is committed to supporting.
3. **Define your publics or target audiences.** Who do you wish to reach with your message? Current members, potential members, young alumni, general community, and the media can all be target audiences.
4. **Define the message.** What are the important issues? Identify these and know which audiences are concerned about which issues. Create clear, key messages that you wish to communicate. The message will vary depending on the audience.
5. **Develop your strategies.** The strategies are a key element of your plan. These are your tools used to reach your target markets and convey your messages, as well as forming the basis of your PR plan. a list of strategies might include:
 - a. Continually develop public-relations materials.
 - b. Use a broad spectrum of media to convey the message.
 - c. Build and develop media contacts.
 - d. Work to position yourself as a credible, reliable source of information for the media.
 - e. Work to position your president as a spokesperson for your chapter.
 - f. Coordinate with other chapter board members.
6. **Set goals.** What do you want to accomplish through public relations? You may wish to:
 - a. Build membership.
 - b. Change attitude or behavior.
 - c. Inform the publics about special events.
 - d. Recognize award winners.
 - e. Communicate scholarship opportunities.
 - a. Increase visibility in the community.
 - b. Effectively promote Texas Exes programs.
 - c. Enhance the image of your chapter.



7. **Be aware of your chapters schedule.** To be effective, you must be informed of what is happening within your chapter. Attend meetings, read email and newsletter communications, and ask questions. Know what your chapter has planned and know its timetable. You cannot communicate what you don't know about.

8. **Develop a timeline.** What strategies are required to achieve your communication goals?

Develop a written plan that details actions needed and when. Prepare a PR calendar based on the chapter event calendar. Information should be sent to the media one to two weeks ahead of the event. Also, identify required resources and develop a budget.

9. **Implement the plan.** Just do it!

10. **Evaluate and measure.** Identify how you will track and measure your success so you can learn for the future. It is easy and free to use a tool like Google Alerts to help you find media clips.

How To Get Your Chapter in the News

- Look for a "hook" or a unique angle in a story. Reporters want to write one-of-a-kind or out-of-the-ordinary stories.
- Don't flood a reporter with reams of paper each week. Send items that are timely, interesting, and newsworthy to the general public. Also make sure to do your research and that you are targeting the right reporter. Reporters change positions frequently.
- Plan ahead. Send your news release to the media two weeks prior to your event.
- Telephone the day before the event as a gentle reminder. Ask for the assignment editor. Don't ask them to commit (they can't), but just say you called to remind them and if they can cover your event, you'd be most appreciative.
- Respect a reporter's deadline. If he needs it by Monday, get it to him by Monday.
- Make sure your news releases are brief and concise; say what needs to be said, usually in two to five paragraphs.
- Radio is often overlooked. Talk/news radio stations are in great need of filling time. Contact them to see if your chapter president could do an interview on a morning show about an upcoming event, or if they would do a live remote from the location of your event. They may also want to be a media sponsor.
- Double-check your facts. It does no good if the media comes to your event on the wrong



day or at the wrong time.

- Always be honest with a reporter. Lost credibility cannot be regained.
- Remember that every good reporter wants to get a story before the competition.
- To show that you're being fair with the timing of your news releases, distribute to all media outlets at the same time. Document when the releases were distributed.
- Tell a reporter when you believe he or she has done a good job on a story. Write a thank-you note for coverage you received. Copy your letter to the general manager or the publisher.
- If your event is not "covered," attempt to gain post-event coverage. Modify your original release to summarize the activity. Again, specify who, what, when, where, and why. Photos with captions and quotes by those involved help make the release interesting and increase its chance of being published. Send the photo electronically. Make sure you identify the chapter, date, event title, and the names of those pictured. Sometimes the photo will be published, but the release will not, so be sure that the caption can stand alone.

Sample Chapter Events Calendar

These are some events that a typical chapter might take part in during the year. Each one of these could garner publicity for your chapter and help to not only inform your community of what your chapter is doing, but also generate membership interest.

- **Game Watching Parties/Tailgates**
- **Scholarship Fundraiser**
- **Texas Independence Day – March 2**
- **Send-Off Celebration**
- **Business/Networking Events**

There are some really easy things you can do to get publicity for these events.

- You can simply take a photo of your group and write a short caption for the photo, then send it to your local paper. Many small-town papers are looking for community news like this to share.
- You can send out a news release prior to the event to try to get the media to come out and do a story on the event.



- Even easier, you can simply make sure you post the event on any community calendars you can find so that people in your area know what you are doing.

Texas Exes Boiler Plate

A boiler plate is a single paragraph that describes your organization and answers the basic questions like who, what, when, where, and why. It is always the last paragraph in a press release and should always include your website. Below is the boiler plate for the Texas Exes. Please make sure it is at the bottom of every press release you send out. If you would like to include your chapter's membership number in there, you can do that as well.

The Texas Exes, the alumni association for The University of Texas, was founded in 1885. The core purpose of the Texas Exes is to be an independent voice that champions the University, and to organize alumni and friends into a formidable network to change the world. Today there are around 99,000 members whom the Association strives to connect to each other and to the past, present, and future of the University through career counseling, travel, reunions, continuing education, fellowship, legislative advocacy in support of higher education, and *The Alcalde* magazine. For more information on Texas Exes or to become a member, please visit <https://www.texasexes.org/>.

Texas Exes Strategic Plan

The Texas Exes core purpose is to be an independent voice that champions the University, and to organize alumni and friends into a formidable network to change the world. Our vision is that the Association will be recognized as indispensable to the UT family, connecting and engaging supporters with each other and The University; together we will lead the charge for the University and its mission to be known worldwide as an institution of the first class. The five priorities of the Texas Exes as outlined in our strategic plan are as follows:

- 1) Advocacy – Dramatically ramp up effort and effectiveness of advocating for UT with multiple governing and decision-making bodies
- 2) Student Development – Execute and accelerate multiple student success approaches
- 3) Alumni Engagement – Significantly increase alumni & supporter participation: people, frequency, and quality
- 4) Strategic Partnering with UT – Manage formal strategic partnerships with the Colleges, Schools, and Units of UT
- 5) Communicating the Value of UT – Communicate the value of UT to the community, state and nation.



Ten Media Relations Tips

1. An interview is like a business meeting. Know what you want to accomplish before it begins. Develop three or four talking points and be sure you use them during the interview.
2. Learn what the reporter is seeking to accomplish and set ground rules before the interview begins. While it is inadvisable to speak off the record, if you plan to do so, make sure that it is stipulated clearly and the reporter agrees before you make off-the-record or background comments.
3. Learn to talk in brief sound bites, usually 25 to 40 words, and focus on the points you want to make – your key messages. Redirect negative questions to the point you are trying to make without repeating false or damaging assertions by the reporter or her sources.
4. Never hide facts. You don't have to volunteer information, but always be honest and forthcoming when you have the information requested.
5. Be aware of reporters' deadlines and schedules.
6. Familiarize yourself with the media outlets you wish to influence.
7. When on television, talk directly to the reporter - not the camera.
8. If you don't know something, say so. You could either answer, "That's a question for so-and-so," or find the answer and get back to the reporter as soon as possible. If you don't, the story is almost certain to be published or aired without that information, or worse, without your explanation.
9. Create releases only for newsworthy items. When considering a topic for its news value, ask yourself the following questions:
 - Is it timely?
 - Is it local?
 - Is it important or interesting to the general public?
 - Does it have consequence or conflict, and is it controversial?
 - Is it new, novel, or different?
 - Are the people involved community leaders, high visibility citizens, or ordinary people?
 - Does it have human interest? What makes it unusual?
 - How will it affect the average person?
 - Is it on the "cutting edge?" Is it something few people know about?
 - Is it odd, unusual, the biggest, the smallest, or is it outstanding in some way, shape, or form?
 - Does it relate to a "hot" news item? Is the media already interested in the topic?



10. There is no such thing as a dumb question. Don't talk down to reporters, don't demean their questions, and don't act as though you are too busy to accommodate them.

Tips for Interviews

The chance for a successful interview increases greatly when you prepare your key messages.

- In your mind, develop the headline you'd like to see in the next day's paper.
- Develop messages based on the interests of your key audiences.
- Think in terms of benefits. That's what your audiences will understand.
- Make each message very, very brief. Use quick phrases, not long sentences.
- Test your messages: Do they urge the listener to arrive at your headline? Do they flow logically from one to the other? If the answer is no to either of these questions, reconsider and redraft your messages.
- If you have time, find a colleague and practice these messages against sample questions.

About The Interview

- **It starts the moment you see the reporter.** Just because you don't see a notebook, Camera, or tape player doesn't mean your comments aren't registering in the reporter's head.
- **A media interview is not a conversation.** It is a stylized exchange of information where the reporter's job is to ask probing questions, and your job is to get one or two key messages across.
- Write these messages down and keep them in front of you.
- **Stick to your key messages and repeat them over and over** (it's surprising how long it takes for some key ideas to sink in)
- Stay professional and courteous
- Answer every question with a one-two punch:
- Answer every question with a direct, honest, and concise response. For example, yes, no, I don't know, or That's not the issue, etc.
- Deliver a key message or two **every time** you answer a question

Remember: Unless it's live, reporters almost never run their questions, only your answers, so concentrate on giving the answers you want!



Crisis Communications

Although we hope to never worry about a crisis, we should always be prepared if something does happen. For example, what if there is a fire at a chapter event? What if someone has too much to drink at a chapter event, drives home, and eventually tries to sue the Chapter? In the event of any kind of crisis, small or large, please be sure to alert Katherine Jones by calling 512.840.5631 or katherine.jones@texasexes.org.



Publicity Report Form

Chapter: _____

Publication: _____

Date of Publication: _____

Brief description of story:



{DATE}

For Immediate Release

Contact: {CHAPTER PRES}
{CHAPTER NAME}
{PHONE #}

Student Receives Prestigious {CITY} Area Scholarship

{CITY}, Texas – {CITY} area student, {RECIPIENT NAME}, has been selected to receive the {SCHOLARSHIP NAME}. {RECIPIENT NAME} attended {HIGH SCHOOL NAME} where she {ACTIVITIES, for example: was captain of the volleyball team and president of the school’s community service organization, Interact Club.} {RECIPIENT NAME} was also very involved in {ACTIVITIES, for example: the Waxahachie community, volunteering for Habitat for Humanity, the Special Olympics and numerous other organizations.} She will enter The University of Texas at Austin in August and plans to study {RECIPIENT MAJOR}.

The {SCHOLARSHIP NAME} is given to {# OF STUDENTS} each year and is funded through the {CHAPTER NAME}. The {CHAPTER NAME} have given {# OF SCHOLARSHIPS} to students entering The University of Texas at Austin over the years. To find out how to contribute to the scholarship fund, visit {CHAPTER WEB ADDRESS}.

{RECIPIENT NAME}, along with other chapter scholarship recipients, will be presented with the scholarship at a dinner to be held in the Etter-Harbin Alumni Center on the University of Texas at Austin campus in September.

The Texas Exes, the alumni association for The University of Texas, was founded in 1885. The core purpose of the Texas Exes is to be an independent voice that champions the University, and to organize alumni and friends into a formidable network to change the world. Today there are around 99,000 members whom the association strives to connect to each other and to the past, present and future of the university through career counseling, travel, reunions, continuing education, fellowship, legislative advocacy in support of higher education and *The Alcalde* magazine. For more information on Texas Exes or to become a member, please visit <https://www.texasexes.org/>.

###