

Managing Public Relations ; Using Radio for Primary Health Care

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Managing Public Relations ; Using Radio for Primary Health Care

Abstract

Reviews of *Managing Public Relations*, by James E. Grunig and Todd Hunt; *Using Radio for Primary Health Care*, by W. A. Sweeney and M. B. Parlato.

Reviews

***Managing Public Relations*, James E. Grunig and Todd Hunt (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York; 1984) \$25.**

In a recent issue of *ACE Quarterly* (67:1, Jan-Mar 1984), author James W. King outlined communications problems and prospects for university agricultural projects. He called for the "professionalization of communication," advocating that "Communication people need to see themselves as professionals dealing with a process that is applicable to a . . . variety of content areas."

Until recently, those of us functioning as public information officers for land-grant universities viewed ourselves as "journalists in residence," covering our campuses in much the same way a beat reporter might for the local metropolitan daily newspaper—with some very important differences, obviously. We are not the detached, objective scribes our counterparts in the Fourth Estate purport to be. We are inextricably tied to the organizations we cover. We are hired by them. We are paid by them. Potentially, we could be fired by them.

Now people like King come along and try to confuse us with the facts by saying that as communicators we are giving a limited interpretations of our jobs if we think of ourselves simply as journalists.

Hooray for King! At the 1983 national ACE Conference, King introduced concepts to ACE members such as pretesting communication strategies. Later during the conference I had the audacity to describe ourselves as "public relations practitioners," if you accept a working definition of public relations as "the management of communication between an organization and its publics."

All of this is bound to leave some young and impressionable communicators with an identity crisis. Are we sup-

posed to be journalists in residence, egghead theoreticians, Madison Avenue mavens or what?

The best answer to date comes from a highly readable new text, *Managing Public Relations* by James E. Grunig and Todd Hunt. Grunig was a general session speaker at the 1983 ACE annual conference, is a professor of journalism at The University of Maryland, and is currently writing another text on science communication.

Managing Public Relations is more than a textbook. Although it is touted as the most theoretical book written about public relations, it also is a practical guide to the profession.

Grunig and Hunt note that the International Public Relations Association (IPRA) issued in 1982 guidelines for public relations education. IPRA said public relations should:

- Be taught as a social science, with academic and professional emphasis.
- Be drawn from professional practice and scholarly theory.
- Help the profession become more analytical.

Grunig and Hunt took those guidelines to heart in *Managing Public Relations*, demonstrating how social science theories can explain public relations problems and provide programs to solve those problems.

Grunig and Hunt also argue that technical skills required of all of us in entry level positions will not alone carry us through careers in public relations. Practitioners must learn management skills so they can become involved in the formulation and management of public relations programs, rather than function as automata who simply carry out orders.

Managing Public Relations in no way serves as an apologist for the profession, nor should public relations function as an apologist for an organization it represents, according to the authors.

Professional practitioners, they point out, should consider themselves "in-house activists," striving to make the organizations they work for more responsible to the publics they serve.

The text is divided into four parts. It begins with general information describing public relations' history, how it benefits an organization, and its status as a profession. It moves from there into more specific development of the concepts of public relations management; the application of those con-

cepts to common public relations problems; and, finally, it discusses the common public relations techniques in vogue today, their place in public relations management, and their application.

If you've never thought of yourself as a public relations practitioner, or if you believe public relations management is not necessary to communicate research, extension, or educational information to your organization's clients, this book may change your mind.

Although it carries a hefty price tag of approximately \$25, *Managing Public Relations* may change forever the way you view your profession.

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***Using Radio for Primary Health Care.* W. A. Sweeney and M. B. Parlato. (Primary Health Care Issues; Ser. 1, No. 1.) American Public Health Association, 1015 15th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., 1980.**

Even though radio has been widely used in international development, many projects continue to need help in determining whether to use it and how to use it.

To fill this need, W. Sweeney, longtime international communicator, and M. Parlato put together an impressive resource document. It is based on an extensive review of the literature from six subject areas whose practitioners have widespread experience in using radio—agriculture, education, health, nutrition, population, and development. From this review, the authors report the key findings on radio's impact and present a guide to developing radio projects.

Through an informative and factual examination of over 88 projects, Sweeney and Parlato found four major functions for radio in international projects. It has been used to educate and provide information, to promote the use of products and services, to elicit feedback and aid the participatory process, and to produce results including change and action. Each of these findings on the impact of radio is elaborated upon with examples from the projects.

The next section presents ideas on the ways radio could be employed to support a health program's objectives and ac-

tivities. Most of these suggestions apply to agricultural programs: 1) to foster community participation, 2) to train and support workers, 3) to present information about services, and 4) to educate and motivate people to act.

Guidelines based on radio research are given in the second chapter. Topics include communication planning, advantages and disadvantages of radio, considerations regarding political support and project management, implementation, and evaluation. Under project management, the authors discuss objectives, audiences, strategies, content and messages, format, and costs.

The strategy section presents five programming alternatives for a communicator to consider: Open broadcasts, listening groups, campaigns, two-way radio, and tape recorders. (Here, "strategy" refers to "the way radio and other resources are programmed to achieve the desired result.") The authors present examples of each strategy and discuss their major advantages and disadvantages.

In the cost section Sweeney and Parlato present a 31-item checklist to help estimate the cost of a radio program. Categories include project development, training, research, message development, program production, field level activities, implementation, and evaluation and supervision.

The appendix lists the programs, projects, and experiments reviewed, the AID resources for field support of radio projects, and project summaries. The project summary appendix covers 47 projects in 23 countries detailing sector, media, strategies, project disciplines, objectives, duration, audience, messages, research evaluation, cost, findings, implications, comments, and references. A bibliography is also included.

Experienced radio communicators will appreciate the insights "Using Radio" offers, and newcomers will find valuable recommendations. Now that radio is an accepted and approved medium in agricultural development programs, the communicator must make an attempt to analyze its role in a particular project. "Using Radio" is an excellent reference.

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