

PUBLIC PERCEPTION FORUM

Tips & Tools for Managing Reputation Kathy Tunheim, Tunheim Partners

Tool #1: The Awareness ---- Familiarity ---- Preference Phenomenon

An organization cannot get to consumer preference (or loyalty) without achieving sufficient awareness, which breeds familiarity. As people become familiar with an organization (or an idea), they are inclined to prefer it...or, in the case of a negative event, they are inclined to give “the benefit of the doubt” to people or organizations they feel are familiar.

Tip #1: Important definitions

Image: the picture/definition an organization projects
Perceptions: the bits and pieces of an image that audiences catch/process
Reputation: the regard with which an organization is held by others - impacted by perceptions, but also by myriad other factors: context; relationship; endorsements; timing.

Tip #2: Managing the impact of news

Because of this progression from awareness through familiarity to preference, it is helpful to analyze AFP when an organization needs to manage a good or bad news event. For example, if awareness of an organization is very low, a bad news event – while disappointing – won’t necessarily have lasting negative impact: it will pass relatively quietly. If on the other hand an organization has had high awareness overtime, news is significantly more impactful: if it is good news, it serves to reinforce people’s inclination toward preference. If it is bad news, people will be open to/looking for information to understand the news – they actually want to balance the bad news with perspective to reclaim their inclination toward preference.

Tool #2: The R-C-R Test

There are three criteria to use in determining whether a proposed communications is a worthy investment. NOTE: it is important to have confidence in the likelihood of being successful with all three of the criteria.

1. *Reach*: Having good data on who the intended recipients are, and quality data on how to reach them (i.e. mailing lists, email addresses, mass media outlets).
2. *Clarity*: Having messages that are compelling and clear TO THE RECIPIENTS, not to the sender.
3. *Relevance*: Timing is everything: given the constant overload of messages, only those communications that are relevant to the recipient at the time they are received actually get processed. Others are bounced back out, unprocessed (think space clutter!).

Tip #3: Being intentional in defining audiences

No organization matters to EVERYONE, and most organizations spend too much time, money and energy trying to communicate with people who are not actually good prospects for a relationship with the organization. (Think AFP here with various audiences). Better strategy is likely to focus on developing healthy relations with qualified prospects, and then benefiting from their endorsements out to their spheres of influence.

Tip #4: Realizing the resistance of audiences

Do not overestimate the extent to which people are “on good receive” for unsolicited information. Most every U.S. consumer is severely overloaded with noise, and is increasingly immune from unsolicited “incoming.”